

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2001

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. R. K. Hollis, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

21 September 2001

The Honourable R. K. Hollis, MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on 21 September 2001:

"A Bill for an Act to provide for the accreditation of non-State schools, and deciding the eligibility of non-State schools' governing bodies for Government funding for the schools, and for other purposes"

"A Bill for an Act to amend the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000".

The Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

(Sgd) peter Arnison

Governor

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Hon. W. A. M. Gunn, AM; Hon. Sir W. E. Knox, KTB, KStJ

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.31 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late William Angus Manson Gunn, a former member of the parliament of Queensland, Deputy Premier and minister of the Crown, and the late Sir William Edward Knox, former member of the parliament of Queensland, Deputy Premier and minister of the Crown.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the families of the deceased gentlemen the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland in the loss they have sustained.

Before I speak about Bill Gunn, I wish to acknowledge the fact that Mrs Lorna Gunn is in the Speaker's Gallery today. I know that she spoke to the Minister for Public Works, who helped to facilitate that. On behalf of all members, I say that we are delighted that you are able to join us today on this very sad occasion. Lorna, we wish you, your children and grandchildren well. We know this is a difficult time for you and we wish you all the best.

All Queenslanders are forever in the debt of Bill Gunn. If it had not been for the courage and determination of Bill to do the right thing, we would never have had the Fitzgerald inquiry to end corruption in Queensland. It was the two-year Fitzgerald inquiry which ended decades of deeply entrenched corruption in Queensland's political system, police and some areas of government. The inquiry did far more than merely put an end to endemic corruption. It set in motion a new era of accountable government, pride in being a police officer, mechanisms whereby people could appeal against decisions which had once been final, and—in all but five electorates—state elections in which the votes of all Queenslanders carry the same weight. That led to a fair electoral system. Queensland now has the most accountable mechanisms and government systems in the world—and, indeed, in the history of this state.

It meant that companies could do business with government knowing that the best tender would win. It meant people could protest without the fear of being beaten. It meant that Queensland became one of the best and fairest democracies in the free world. It meant Queensland truly became the best place in the world in which to live.

Let there be no doubt that we owe this new era of freedom and accountability to the initial work started by Bill Gunn, with the support later on of Mike Ahern. I doubt whether there has ever been a more important, far-reaching and courageous decision made by a Queensland government minister than that made in the fight against corruption by Bill Gunn in May 1987.

It is also important to realise that Bill knew the size of the explosion he was setting off, and the effect it would have on the National Party government. It was this knowledge which made the decision all the more courageous, because Bill was born and bred on the Country Party philosophy of honesty.

He was born in Laidley on 22 June 1920 and educated at local state schools. Apart from serving as a member of the First Cavalry Mobile Veterinary Service in the Second World War, he continued to live in the Laidley area where he was a grazier. In 1966, Bill entered local politics as a councillor with the Laidley Shire Council, becoming chairman from 1970 to 1973. He then stepped up to state parliament, winning Somerset in May 1972, and holding the seat for 20 years, until his retirement in 1992.

In his maiden speech to the Legislative Assembly on 14 September 1972, Bill noted—

In many areas the local Council is the main employer of labour, and the families whose breadwinners are employed by the Council are assisting to keep many small towns alive ... I contend that if we want people to stay in the country we must provide them with the amenities that are enjoyed by city people.

I think we all say 'hear, hear' to that.

Bill was Deputy Premier from 1983 to 1989, Minister for Education from 1980 to 1982, Minister for Commerce and Industry from 1982 to 1983, Minister Assisting the Treasurer from 1983 to 1987, Minister for Police from 1986 to 1989, Minister for Public Works, Main Roads and Expo from 1987 to 1989, Minister for Housing in 1989, and Minister for Finance and Local Government in 1989. He had very broad ministerial experience. He certainly served the state well.

During his term in office, Bill served also as my Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee—the first Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. He served also as a member of the Standing Orders Committee and was the Temporary Chairman of Committees. In 1975 and 1985, Bill served as the Queensland delegate at the Australian Constitutional Convention.

However, it was Bill's appointment as Police Minister that resulted in his becoming aware of a considerable volume of evidence of endemic corruption. On the day he became Police Minister, he started collecting documents alleging corruption. His problem was knowing how to deal with the evidence when it was obvious to him that the corruption went right to the top. When the ABC *Four Corners* program 'The Moonlight State' presented fresh corruption allegations, Bill was Acting Premier. Without consulting any of his colleagues, he announced that there would be a commission of inquiry. On 26 May 1987, in a joint media release with Attorney-General Paul Clauson, he announced the appointment of Tony Fitzgerald to head the inquiry. The rest, as they say, is history.

For the record of the parliament, I table the news release issued at that time. There was in fact a joint news release by Bill Gunn and Paul Clauson about the appointment of the inquiry, which I think is important for the record. I table also a later press release from the commission of inquiry itself and to which Bill Gunn had provided material. It stated—

The Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Conduct today declined to comment on the contents of documents which had been supplied to it by the Police Minister, Mr. Gunn.

In other words, he not only established the inquiry; he provided it with information and evidence. I table both of those documents for the information of the House.

In his speech to the Legislative Assembly on 6 July 1989 in response to the tabling of the Fitzgerald inquiry report, Bill noted—

The document which Queensland now has before it not only marks the end of an era in this State, but also sets out a clear, fresh path for the future. It provides the avenue along which we can proceed into the future, but with the benefit of learning from the past—and there is much to learn.

The reform process was then carried on by the Goss government.

In 1999, Bill was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia for service to the parliament of Queensland, to local government through the Laidley Shire Council and to the community. It may well have added, 'And for enabling Queenslanders to enjoy a better way of life.' Bill is survived by his wife, Lorna, five children and 17 grandchildren. On the numerous occasions when I had discussions with him, he certainly expressed a great love for not just his children but also his

grandchildren. He loved them very dearly. I extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family. And I say to them, on behalf of all Queenslanders, you can hold your heads high and be proud of what Bill achieved.

As I indicated, Bill was Deputy Chairman of the first Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee on which Robert Schwarten, Wendy Edmond, Margaret Woodgate, Santo Santoro and Neville Harper also served. We were the first members of the committee and we knew him well. We travelled extensively. One of the things that I came to admire about him was his sense of humour.

I can remember one occasion when the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee was investigating that very difficult subject of prostitution. We had to make some recommendations as a result of the Fitzgerald inquiry as to what our position would be. We embarked on a number of interstate meetings and delegations.

I will never forget the time we were in a brothel. It is not the sort of thing you normally admit to in parliament, but I am delighted that all sides of politics were there. We were in a brothel in Perth accompanied by police. We were interviewing the madam. The madam was sitting on a chair across from us and I was sitting with Wendy Edmond, Bill Gunn and Robert Schwarten. I did not realise it at the time but behind us was a nude painting, which I had not seen on arrival. It was causing great mirth for Margaret Woodgate and Neville Harper, who could see the funny side of this. There was a hallway there and, during the discussions, a scantily clad young lady rushed by. Bill Gunn, displaying his dry sense of humour, said to the madam, 'There can't be any money in this, my dear lady. The poor woman can't afford clothes.' That was Bill Gunn. He had a great sense of humour.

As Lorna knows, I had the opportunity to interview Bill for my Master of Arts thesis on the CJC and the Fitzgerald inquiry. There is no doubt: anyone who spent some time interviewing Bill will know that he was committed to what he did, he believed in what he did, he took the pain for what he did, but Queensland is a better place for what he did. Lorna, you have the sympathy of all of us. We wish you and the family well.

I now move on to Sir William Knox. Sir William Knox was born in Kew in Victoria on 14 December 1927. Sir William was educated in Melbourne. In 1953, Sir William became the State President of the Queensland Young Liberals and held the position until 1956. Sir William's party activity was varied and included serving as a member of the Federal Council from 1953 to 1957; State Vice-President from 1956 to 1957; member of the State Executive from 1953 to 1956, 1960 to 1964 and 1971 to 1978; and member of the Federal Council from 1976 to 1978.

Sir William won the seat of Nundah in the state election on 3 August 1957, and he held this seat for 32 years—until 1989. In fact, he held it for the whole time that the Labor Party was out of office—for those 32 years. In his maiden speech to the Legislative Assembly on 5 September 1957, Sir William noted—

The future of the trade union movement, if it is to remain free and if it is to function for the good of the rank and file member, lies in cooperation and goodwill between itself and management.

If wages are to be increased and if working hours are to be shortened, production per man hour must be increased. If these things can be done—and they should be done—the status of the working man will be improved immeasurably.

We believe that whilst we are the Government it is one of our jobs to see that the working man gets his full due and that his status is improved.

The sentiments expressed by Sir William in his maiden speech are echoed in the policies of my government.

Sir William was Leader of the Liberal Party from 1976 to 1978 and from 1983 to 1988, Deputy Premier from 1976 to 1978, Minister for Transport from 1965 to 1971, Minister for Justice and Attorney-General from 1971 to 1976, Treasurer from 1976 to 1978, Minister for Health from 1978 to 1980, and Minister for Employment and Labour Relations from 1980 to 1983.

During his term in office, Sir William served as the secretary of the Joint Government Parties, a delegate to the General Conference Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Jamaica and to the Australian Constitutional Conventions and was the leader of a parliamentary delegation to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Sir William was known for his deep integrity, sense of fairness and willingness to listen. He was also a fierce advocate for better education for Australia's children. In 1979, Sir William was created a Knight Bachelor.

Sir William was the patron of a number of community organisations, including the Northern Suburbs Rugby League Club, the Nundah Bowling Club, the Nundah Kindergarten Association

and the Toombul District Cricket Club. Sir William was a member of the Order of St John of Jerusalem since 1986—as I am—and was created a Knight of St John in 1995. More recently, Sir William was Chairman of the State Council of St John Ambulance and President of the Association of Independent Schools Queensland. Sir William is survived by his wife, Alexia, and four children. I extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family.

Like many people who were involved in politics during the period I knew Sir William, he did believe in the proud Liberal Party tradition. He worked to rebuild the Liberal Party after the decimation, I guess you could say, of the Liberal Party in the 1983 state election. I do not say that in any critical sense but in a factual sense. He worked very hard to rebuild the Liberal Party at that very difficult time. That is why he became leader again in the Liberal Party's hour of need. Indeed, I know that Sir William is well regarded within Liberal Party ranks and circles for taking on the tough job when he was needed.

Many honourable members will remember Sir William as someone who was very committed to charitable work. He used to engage in his yearly swim to raise money for charity, which got not only an enormous amount of publicity but also good publicity for the charity that he supported. I pass on the condolences and best wishes of all members of parliament to his family. We wish them well at this difficult time.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.46 a.m.): I join with the Premier in seconding this motion of condolence to the families of Bill Gunn and Sir William Knox. These were two truly great leaders, two truly great members of the Queensland parliament. How sad and incongruous it was that their funerals were held side by side, day by day.

Bill Gunn was born in Laidley in 1920. One of the remarkable things about Bill Gunn's life is that he was born in Laidley in the Lockyer district, he grew up in that area, he went to school in that area, he met his wife in that area, he represented the council in that area, he ran his farm in that area, he represented parliament in that area, he retired in that area and he died in that area. With the mobility of people and families these days it is not very often that we see that type of consistency, of someone spending almost their total life and undertaking their community work in one particular area.

Bill was married to Lorna in April 1957. Lorna, it is lovely to see you here in the parliament. We are all very proud of what Bill has achieved. It was lovely to see you and your family at that sad time. Bill and Lorna had two sons and three daughters: Dr Bill Gunn and his wife, Jennifer—Dr Bill spoke at the funeral and it was wonderful to see his son able to stand up and speak so generously and completely of his father as he did—Councillor Morrie Gunn; Dr Jennifer Ann Gunn and Phil Burr; Helen and William Bowie, who live in the Torres Strait and who are the reason for Bill's close attachment to the people of the Torres Strait; and Karen and Stephen Harper. They have 17 grandchildren.

As I said, Bill was born and bred in the area. He learnt to ride his pony in the area. As a child, he scrounged around for work in the area. He attended the Laidley North State School and the Lockyer District State High School. He worked as a clerk for a while in Gympie and then came back to Laidley to work as a farmer. He gave service during the war in the home service veterinary section. In the days before the formalities that surround the veterinary profession, Bill Gunn was renowned throughout the Lockyer Valley as their local vet. He was called out on many occasions to attend to people's horses, cattle and so forth. He was somewhat renowned in the district for what you might call his amateur veterinary status but also for his love and knowledge of animals.

He gave enormous service to his district. He was a councillor on the Laidley Shire Council from 1966 to 1970 and was chairman of that council from 1970 to 1973. He was chairman of the Laidley branch of the Country and National Party from 1968 to 1973 and was a delegate for the Lockyer branch from 1968 to 1972.

Bill Gunn became the member for Somerset in 1972 at the age of 52, which is a relatively late age to enter parliament, and gave 20 years of faithful service until he retired at the age of 72. During that time he was Acting Speaker, Temporary Chairman of Committees, a delegate to the Australian Constitution Convention and Chairman of the Local Government and Main Roads Committee. He was the Minister for Education, the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer. He also held the ministry of Water Resources and Maritime Services. He was then the Deputy Premier, Minister Assisting the Treasurer and Minister for Police. He also held a number of other portfolios during the interim Ahern ministry. He was Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, Main Roads and Expo and Minister for Police from December 1987 to 1989. He was Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, Housing and Main

Roads from January 1989 to September 1989. He was Deputy Premier, Minister for Finance and Local Government from September 1989 to December 1989. He had a very long, distinguished and responsible career.

Bill was renowned throughout the area for his farming activities. In the years I have been coming to parliament I always look as I drive past his farm on the side of the Warrego Highway. In recent years Bill has let his cows and calves out of the yard. In his old utility and with his old dogs, he patrols the cows and calves on the side of the Warrego Highway while they eat the grass. I do not know whether there is a fence, because there was a lot of long grass on the footpath and I could not see if there was a fence or not. But it always struck me that in these modern days he was the old shepherd, and it was something he loved. There was Bill in his ute with his two old dogs and every afternoon he would patrol around the cows and calves he let out.

As I said, Bill was totally someone of the Lockyer. He was renowned for his pets at his house. He also had a very close affiliation with the Torres Strait. He loved the people, and his daughter married into a Torres Strait family. He really loved the people. One of his favourite holidays was to go to the Torres Strait. It was just wonderful to see the people of the Torres Strait at the funeral who heaped accolades on Bill and who sang at the funeral. He was a very good member with an incredible local knowledge. He was very much a grassroots member for his area who was able to achieve so much, particularly the little things that mattered to people.

What Queensland will always remember Bill Gunn for in history is the fact that it was Bill Gunn who had the courage and the fortitude to make the decision that was right and correct to put in place the Fitzgerald inquiry. When I was at the funeral listening to his family talk about him, listening to his life history and listening to his friends and former staff speak about Bill, you could understand the quality of the man and why he made that very difficult decision. It must have been an incredibly tough decision for him to make, but he made the decision based on what he thought was right. The legacy of that decision is that in Queensland we have a Queensland Police Service that is undoubtedly the pride of Australia, and perhaps the pride of the world. It is highly regarded. We have a Police Service in which the police officers themselves have great pride in their service, in their colleagues and in their leadership. To a great extent, that is due to the courage that Bill Gunn had to make a very difficult decision, a decision that he thought was right and honourable.

That inquiry led to many other aspects of electoral reform and openness and accountability of government. Bill Gunn is no doubt responsible for all that happening in the first instance. In my mind, the thing we will always remember him for is the courage of that decision, the correctness of the decision and the legacy he gave to the Queensland Police Service, which is so important to us in this state. I join with the Premier in offering the sincere condolences of the opposition and this parliament to Lorna and her family in thanking Bill for a job well done, for the way that he cared for and loved his family so intensely, for the way he looked after the people in his local area, and for the sterling and honourable service that he gave the people of Queensland.

Sir William Knox was one of the great parliamentarians in the history of this parliament. I do not think many people would have given 32 years of continuous service and, in that time, undertaken the heavy responsibilities that he undertook in his various ministries and during his Deputy Premiership. He was born in Victoria in 1927, educated at the Melbourne High School and employed as a company secretary and manager. Sir William Knox had an enormous involvement in the community. He was a member of the National Executive of the Australian Junior Chamber of Commerce. He was a senator in Junior Chamber International. He was State President of the Father and Son Movement in 1965. He was Deputy Chairman of the Queensland Division of Australia Outward Bound since 1967. I think that gives some indication of the way in which he held family in such high regard.

In the northern suburbs of Nundah and Toombul, Sir William was patron of the Northern Suburbs Rugby League Club and Chairman of Norths Leagues Club. That reminds me that when I played for Eastern Suburbs we always regarded Bishop Park as 'Bash-up Park'. Those Northern Suburbs supporters were staunch supporters, and for many years he was patron of that club and chairman of the leagues club. He was Chairman of the Nundah Bowling Club, Chairman of the Nundah Kindergarten Association, past President of the Toombul Cricket Club and President of the Wongargo District Boy Scouts Association. Sir William had an enormous interest in education and was Chairman of the Independent Schools Association in 1993 and 1994 and did much for that association. He was knighted in 1979.

His political involvement commenced with the Young Liberal Party and he was State President of that party from 1953 to 1956 and became Vice-President of the Queensland Liberal

Party from 1956 to 1957 and served for a number of years on the executive of the Queensland Liberal Party. He was elected as the member for Nundah on 3 August 1957 and served until 1989, a total of 32 continuous and loyal years of service to that area. During that period, he held some very important areas of responsibility. He was Minister for Transport, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Minister for Justice and Attorney-General and Minister for Transport, Minister for Justice and Attorney-General again, Leader of the Liberal Party from 1976 to 1978, Deputy Premier and Treasurer from 1976 to 1978, Treasurer from October 1978 through to December 1978, Minister for Health from December 1978 to December 1980, Minister for Employment and Labour Relations, and Leader of the Liberal Party from 1983 to 1988. I think we would all agree that all of those portfolios were in very important and difficult portfolios which all had a heavy responsibility.

I did not know Sir William Knox; I was not in parliament in that time. But as someone outside of parliament watching it through the media and so forth, he always struck me as very much a real gentleman and elder statesman. I think we can all look at Sir William Knox as someone who gave a great example of how you hold a position in parliament and work on issues of policy and issues that are important to your electorate and play a straight bat and play it straight down the middle. He was a very firm Liberal leader. The fact that amongst the eminent speakers at his service was Sir James Killen, who gave a very eloquent accolade about what Sir William had achieved, speaks volumes for the esteem in which Sir William Knox is held.

Sir William Knox was very much a person of his electorate, a person who held enormous responsibility within state government, a senior statesman, a person whom we can all look up to and admire, a member of parliament who set a great standard for all of us here in this House and those to come. On behalf of the opposition and of the parliament, I offer to Alexia and her children and family every sincere condolence from this parliament.

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (9.58 a.m.): On behalf of the Liberal Party, I rise to support the motion of condolence moved by the Premier and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. We are here today to acknowledge Bill Gunn, a man who made a great difference and contribution to this state and to its institutions. He genuinely changed the course of history in this state. He was a man who served his community in many ways. He served in the Second World War for his country. He served as a local councillor and later as Mayor of the Shire of Laidley. He also represented the electorate of Somerset for 20 years and was responsible for multiple ministerial portfolios over the years.

Bill Gunn also served as Deputy Premier of this great state from 1983 to 1989. His service to the community was outstanding. But Bill will be known for his decision to initiate the Fitzgerald inquiry that damaged the party he loved and to which he dedicated so many years of his life. Many have not forgotten the sacrifice and the commitment that he made to the state of Queensland that set us on this new direction. He stood tall and carried out his actions with strong conviction and a dedication regardless of the opposition. It would be impossible to argue that the state is not a better place because of his decision. But we should not forget the characteristics that made him the man he was. Bill had a great sense of humour and enjoyed telling a story. He was a friendly man with strong family values and principles. We have seen the passing of a man who made a great contribution to the electorate and to this state. As Leader of the Liberal Party I offer condolences on behalf of my party colleagues to Bill's wife, Lorna, and his family and friends on their loss.

The Liberal Party joins in paying tribute to one of the outstanding servants of this parliament and our state, Sir William Knox. The public life of Sir William Knox was characterised by two features: its longevity and its integrity. Sir William Knox served in this parliament for 32 years. His record of unbroken service is exceeded by just eight former members in the 142-year history of this House. He served for almost 18 years as a minister—a record of unbroken ministerial service exceeded only by four of the most significant names in the political history of this state: Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, E.M. Hanlon, Thomas Foley and Sir Gordon Chalk. Indeed, if his service as Liberal leader between 1983 and 1988 is taken into account, he is the second-longest officeholder in our history.

The longevity of Sir William's service to the parliament and the state is exceeded only by that of his service to the Liberal Party. He was one of the founders of the party in Queensland and together with Sir James Killen established the Young Liberal movement in this state in 1949. He succeeded Sir James as state president and went on to become state vice-president of the party. As the House knows, Sir William was deputy parliamentary Liberal leader from 1971 to 1976 and

leader from 1976 to 1978 and from 1983 to 1988. His service to our party was rightly recognised when he was made a life member of the party in 1985.

The true measure of the length of his service in public office is demonstrated by the fact that, even though it is only 12 years since he left parliament, there are just eight members here today who served in parliament with him. Sir William was the only member to serve in this House during the whole of the 32-year period of non-Labor rule between 1957 and 1989. Indeed, he came in with the change of government in 1957 and left when the Goss Labor government was elected in 1989.

There are a couple of points I want to make about Sir William's service as a member of this House. He was a member first and a minister or leader second. He won no fewer than 11 elections, converting Nundah from a relatively safe Labor seat into a Liberal bastion for 32 years. Despite winning election after election, he never took the electorate for granted. His electoral roll was almost a bible. He knew every change in enrolment, every new voter and so on. Even when he was a senior minister the electorate came first. He also kept in touch with the real world through his assiduous attendance at electorate functions, especially P&C meetings, and by the fact that he remained chairman of the board of directors of Norths Leagues Club in the heart of his electorate during the whole of his ministerial service.

History will probably regard Sir William as a conservative, yet his record as minister is one of significant, even adventurous, reform in an era when reform was hardly the flavour of the day. As Minister for Justice and Attorney-General Sir William pioneered consumer protection legislation which became the benchmark for the rest of Australia. He established Australia's first Small Claims Tribunal and ensured that Queensland was the first state to outlaw pyramid selling. He was also an industrious law reformer, repealing old laws and updating a whole range of statutes. In one year he presented more bills to parliament than did the rest of the cabinet combined.

I am proud to say that Sir William regarded the independence of the judiciary as being fundamental. His judicial appointments were characterised by their quality, not their politics. It is a pity that others did not follow his example. He served in five portfolios, highlighted by his term as Deputy Premier and Treasurer, but I am told that it was his service as Transport Minister and Minister for Justice and Attorney-General that gave him the greatest satisfaction.

The demise of the coalition in 1983 affected him greatly. He had been a strong coalitionist, but his commitment to the Liberal Party and his integrity were demonstrated when he refused the opportunity to remain in the Bjelke-Petersen ministry after the coalition broke up. After the disastrous 1983 election result he was elected leader of the Liberal Party. When sitting on the crossbenches between 1983 and 1988 he helped to rebuild what was a shattered and demoralised party organisation.

The second quality Sir William will be remembered for is his integrity. One can look through *Hansard* or the newspapers in the library and see that during the whole of his career in this place and in the ministry there was not the slightest hint of scandal, malpractice or misdemeanour. In his eulogy at Sir William's state funeral, Sir James Killen said that his integrity was his outstanding hallmark, right throughout one of the longest political careers in this state, encompassing as it did some of the most tumultuous periods in our history. His integrity served our state, this parliament and the Liberal Party well. It is appropriate that his integrity and his service to Queensland were rewarded when he was knighted and, on his death, accorded a state funeral. On behalf of the Liberal Party, and I am sure his family, I thank the Premier for according Sir William a state funeral. It was a gesture which justly recognised an outstanding career.

On his defeat in 1989 Sir William retired completely from politics. As far as I can gather, he made no public comment on political events after he left this place, but he did not give up serving his community. In fact, if anything he actually stepped up his community service, becoming state chairman of the St John Ambulance, President of the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland and a member of the national executive of those bodies. He remained active in local groups in the Nundah electorate, including the schools his children had attended and his grandchildren attend today.

Sir William was an outstanding servant of the Liberal Party in Queensland for over 40 years, and my colleagues, including those who served with him in the parliament and the party organisation, join with me in paying tribute to his commitment to the party and to his service to the people of Nundah and the state of Queensland. I extend to Lady Lexie Knox, his sons, Andrew and Cameron, and his daughters, Fiona and Kerreth, and their families my sympathy and that of our party on Sir William's sudden passing. I am sure they are all comforted by the knowledge that

he achieved so much and served our state and community with total distinction and integrity for so many years.

Hon. R. E. SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton— ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing) (10.07 a.m.): I had the privilege of being asked by the Gunn family to speak at Bill's state funeral. I place on record to you, Lorna, my sincere thanks for that great privilege.

Decency, honesty and good humour transcend the boundaries that separate us as politicians. I am delighted to be able to say in this parliament that Bill Gunn was my mate. We were an unlikely couple, I guess.

Mr Mackenroth: The odd couple.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I guess you could say we were the odd couple in terms of his very staunch National Party background and my staunch Labor background. We were as alike as cheese and chalk. I guess it would appear to the passer-by that somebody like Bill would never have anything in common with somebody like me. That certainly was far from the case.

A lot has been said here today. I do not intend to go over again the circumstances that made him famous and that will, in my view, stand his name in very good stead in this state forever. I refer of course to his very gutsy effort in ensuring that justice came to Queenslanders by way of the Fitzgerald inquiry. Enough of that is on the record and I think it speaks for itself. I want to talk more about the man I grew to like and whose company I sought. He was without doubt one of the funniest people I have ever met. He liked to share a yarn—and he knew plenty of them. The trouble was that he forgot who he had told them to and he repeated them time and time again.

One of those stories was about his great-grandfather of Scottish ancestry who had somebody staying with him. I think it was Bill's father; that was supposed to be the story. He encouraged the young Gunn to save his money and, to do that, had provided a large moneybox under the house. Every week the young Gunn would place a shilling in the moneybox. Come the end of the year, he came to see what had happened to the shillings, and he found out that it was the gas meter. So that was one of the stories that I am sure, Lorna, you have heard about 1,000 times and so, too, did I. He had a great capacity to see a very funny side of some very serious events.

I told this yarn at his funeral, but it bears telling again. It is about the time that he went out to open a nursing home in western Queensland. He was confronted with a very enthusiastic matron who wanted to show off with great pride how they looked after their wonderful clientele there. To do that, she pointed to the most elderly resident that they had there and insisted that this woman was a great National Party supporter; that she would be horrified if she did not meet Mr Gunn while he was at the opening ceremony. Bill, of course, being the shy bloke that he was, did not want to intrude on this lady's privacy but was encouraged, of course, by the overzealous matron to do so. He told me that, when he got to the door, he was relieved to see that she was asleep. He said, 'Don't wake her up,' but the matron said, 'I must insist. She would be terribly, terribly upset to know that you had been here and you had not visited her.' So he said, 'All right.'

So she woke up this old dear, and then she said, 'By the way, Mr Gunn, she is very special because she actually had a birthday just yesterday. She turned 100.' So this poor old soul was laying back, she blinked open her eyes, and the matron said, 'Mr Gunn is here to see you.' She said, 'Who?' She said, 'Mr Gunn.' She said, 'Who's he?' The matron said, 'He's the Deputy Premier of Queensland.' 'What's that?', she said. Bill said, 'I could see how embarrassed the poor old matron was, so he said, 'I believe you've had a birthday recently.' She said, 'Birthday? Birthday? I haven't had a birthday.' He said, 'Yes, you did.' 'Did we have a party?', she asked. He said, 'Yes. Look at all these beautiful balloons.' 'How old was I, anyway?', she asked. He said, 'You are 100, I believe.' She said, 'God, am I that bloody old!' So he had that capacity to really see the funny side of a story, to stand back from it and look at it, and I guess that served him well in politics.

As most Deputy Premiers would know, some of the less enthusiastic tasks that Premiers want to perform are handed down to Deputy Premiers. One of those is, of course, making sure that all the troops are happy and behaving themselves. In one such case, Bill was alerted to the misbehaviour or apparent misbehaviour or reported misbehaviour of one of his colleagues, and he had to go and confront this person and advise the good gentleman that it would be wise if, in future, he had his home-cooked meals at home.

Mr Beattie: And did he?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I don't know. There were a number of other things that I shared with Bill. One was a fondness for fishing. He never tired of telling the great stories of how he caught huge fish up in the Torres Strait and he had the photos to prove it. But when I got to see them, Lorna, when I visited your house, I noticed that you were holding them, and I did not see him holding too many big ones at all. So like all fishers, I guess he was not truthful in that regard.

He was also a great supporter of state education, and he proudly pointed out to his children how well they had done through the state education system. He was not passionate about unions, funnily enough. That was something about which—being a passionate unionist myself—we had some discussion from time to time. There is always a reason for people believing in what they do, and he put it down to this: he brought a mob of cattle up to Ipswich, I think, on one occasion. He saw that the bloke who was working in the yards there was having trouble holding them together, so he jumped into the yard to help this bloke out, and everybody went out on strike. What he did not realise was that there was an industrial campaign on there to try to get more people on the ground. We talked about issues like that, and he developed a better understanding from talking them through, and I certainly developed an understanding of where he stood on those sorts of issues.

The other thing he had a fondness for was a scotch around the Members' Bar of an afternoon. We used to perch in the corner there, and he would have a little cigar from time to time as well, and we would share each other's company.

Another great love of his was animals. Bill was terribly fond of his animals. In fact, during one of his last contributions in this parliament, when Tom Burns was a minister, he spoke with great clarity and with affection of the cattle that he was handfeeding at the time during a drought.

Bill also had a great understanding of what made people tick. I read in Peter Charlton's comments on him in 1992 that he said that he never, ever favoured the new regime, I suppose, of the white-shoe brigade that crept into the National Party. He said, 'They're not my sort of people, but they are people just the same who have a place and have a place to be represented, but not by me.' So he understood those groups of people, and I think that was a pretty intuitive statement that he had to make in that regard.

In conclusion, I want to say that life has been great to me to have put me in contact with Bill Gunn. You can always learn something from somebody who is older, and you can always learn something from somebody who is not necessarily of your brand of politics or has come from your side of the street. And I did learn many things from him. He had two great wishes. One was—and he said it in this parliament—that he would get another 10 years. He came within two weeks of getting that. The other thing that he had a great wish for was that his grandchildren would remember him as being somebody who changed the fortunes of this state for the better, unlike the previous ministers who had swept aside the allegations of corruption. Bill, you got your way in that regard.

As I said, he was a good mate of mine. He was a top family man. He never, ever stopped—I was going to say big-noting himself, but it was not really that—reminding you of how wonderful his kids were. For a start he would say, 'I've got two doctors in my family.' He was enormously proud of them, as they are of him.

To you, Lorna, I cannot begin to imagine what grief you must be going through. I thank you again for the privilege of speaking on Bill's behalf. To his sons, Bill and Maurie, and to his daughters, Helen, Jennifer and Karen, I say: you have lost a dad, but he has left us with a great legacy for Queensland. Rest in peace, Bill Gunn.

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.18 a.m.): I first heard of Bill Gunn when I heard on the news that a gentleman from an area called Somerset was fighting like crazy for a power station in the area. I then had the very good fortune to run into him at a local government conference in Rockhampton well before I was elected to parliament. He came up and had a yarn, as he always did, and he asked me what my intentions were and did I have any political intentions. Certainly I did. But anybody in the past to whom I had mentioned that did not give me a lot of hope. Bill was the first fellow who, all of a sudden, said, 'Hey, I think you can win that seat.' From then on he came and helped me, and the encouragement that he gave me was something that I have never, ever lost sight of.

Lorna is in the gallery. She was always such a great mate to him. Bill and I progressed through the parliament and served in the Bjelke-Petersen cabinet together for many years. Bill continued to give me very, very good advice and was always a friend. But what I liked about him

was that you could always go and talk to him. It would be a sit-down yarn and possibly one or two of those jokes that Robert mentioned.

Speaking of Robert, we had an interesting time in our lives courtesy of Bill Gunn. There was a redistribution and two members of parliament had to stand for election to one seat. I can see Robert smiling opposite. Bill thought that, because he was a mate of mine and a mate of Robert's, he had to be very impartial. I think he set it upon himself to be father confessor and adviser. He seemed set that we should both run a model campaign and that appeared to be the advice. I can assure members that he gave Robert plenty of advice and he gave me plenty of advice, but I do not think that he gave away any of our secrets. From that point of view, that election was a very hard fought one, and this parliament could regard our election campaign as a model of a hard-fought campaign without any mud-slinging. It was very, very good. Perhaps Bill gave me just a little bit more advice than he gave Robert—I do not know.

With the passing of Bill Gunn, we have lost somebody very, very special. Certainly, I am thinking of Lorna very, very much at this time.

I followed Sir William Knox into the ministry to the portfolio of Industrial Relations and training. The events at the time were very sad for Sir William, because he did not like party splits. He was a great coalitionist, and after serving 18 very distinguished years as a minister it must have hurt him very, very much. But he was so dignified. I can remember him introducing me to the staff and the officers and then just quietly fading away.

Sir William never, ever became vindictive in the parliament. He would make speeches, but he was always happy to give advice. Although Sir William's responsibility was for the Liberal members of parliament, he often came out to my electorate of Peak Downs and wandered about with me in a very matter-of-fact style. I learned a lot from him. If there is such a thing as a perfect person, Sir William was one of them. He did not ever do anything wrong. He served his community in a big way, but he could sit down and have a dust-up as well as anybody.

I owe great gratitude to Sir William, his wife, Alexia, and their family, and so does this parliament. Hopefully, we can all aspire to the example that Sir William set. But, of course, most of us fail in some way or another.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN (Stafford—ALP) (10.23 a.m.): I rise to support the motion before the House. As the former member for Nundah, I will speak about Sir William Knox. Members will recall that I did not directly succeed Sir William Knox but for 18 months I shared the electorate that he had held for a long period and during that time I had considerable contact with him. Also, because of my former occupation as an independent teacher and with the Independent Teachers Union, I had dealings with him when he was with the AISQ, which at that time represented about 7,000 teachers and 75,000 students in independent schools.

Members will be aware that after elections the handover to the succeeding member can have its ups and downs. If a member is handing the seat over to a member of their own party, generally the handover is fairly smooth. If the handover is to a member of an opposing party, there can be problems. In 1989, when the Goss government came to power, the handover from Sir William was dignified and cooperative. When we spoke about that at a later time, Sir William said that he did not want to disadvantage the community groups or the individuals in the electorate, and that is why that occurred.

Sir William was very involved in local issues. I will tell one story that involves not only Sir William but also the other gentleman about whom we are speaking today. Members will know that the Nundah bottleneck has been a problem for about 40 years.

Mr Bredhauer: Even longer.

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: The Minister for Transport says 'even longer'. That is true. One of the proposals was to go up the western side of the Nundah shopping centre, basically up Bage Street. Sir William Knox invited Bill Gunn, who was then, I believe, the Transport Minister, out to the site. It was going to be a nice, quiet meeting just to talk about things. When Bill Gunn arrived, he found a number of parents—depending on who is telling the story, between 100 and 300—of students of the Nundah State School, St Joseph's and Corpus Christi College who were vigorously opposed to the Bage Street option, which would have redirected traffic past those three schools. Needless to say, after that very sublime ambush the option for the western bypass of Nundah was shelved by Bill Gunn. I think that reflects what the Leader of the Liberal Party said: he was a member first before he was a minister. That is how he survived for 32 years in parliament. On behalf of the Nundah constituents, I publicly express my sympathies to Sir William's widow and family.

Ms LIDDY CLARK (Clayfield—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I, too, rise to pay tribute to someone who was the epitome of a good politician, someone who dedicated their political life to their constituency, and someone who dedicated their life after politics to the community—a person for whom the ideals of responsibility, fairness and accountability were more than just words, a person who truly believed in the ability of a member to make a difference in the lives of their constituency, and who never placed personal ambition before the needs of the community. Of course, I speak of Sir William Knox.

Sir William held the seat of Nundah from 1957 to 1989—an area that the Clayfield electorate now encompasses. As a resident of Sandgate Road, Sir William was my constituent. As we mourn his passing, I take from his courage and ability the hope that I may serve my constituency with the same grace, dignity and honour as he served his constituency.

The dedication with which Sir William served his constituency, never once letting the pressures of leadership and ministerial responsibility detract from his commitment to this electorate, is a legacy to which all ministers and members should aspire. Moreover, his commitment to the state of Queensland above and beyond party politics is a rare quality. I take courage and inspiration from the legacy of Sir William and hope that he would have been proud to have me as the caretaker of his constituency.

A politician has an important trust—to look after the hopes of the people and to share their burden in times of difficulty. I hope that Sir William can rest easily in the knowledge that I will keep safe that trust. To Alexia, his wife, and his four children, I ask them to please accept my sincere condolences and the condolences of the House. I ask them to take comfort in knowing that Sir William has the respect of all sides of politics and will be long remembered as a bastion of government for and of the people and as the epitome of integrity, justice and equality.

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): I wish to make a brief contribution to the condolence motion on Sir William Knox, who up until the last redistribution was a constituent of mine in the suburb of Nundah. I have been the member for Nudgee since 1995 and had met Sir William on only a few occasions, but I know from my personal contact with him and discussions with local Liberal members and members of the community that he was a man of great integrity and was very highly respected for the work that he undertook within the community. In many respects Sir William could be described as a thoroughly decent man of great integrity. I think the speakers so far in this motion have reinforced that.

Sir William was very active in his local community, particularly in local schools and community groups. As has been mentioned, he was the patron of the great Northern Suburbs Football Club, an honour that I now share with him. On behalf of the people of the Nudgee electorate, we extend our sincere condolences to Lady Knox and her family.

Motion agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Report

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (10.30 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee's annual report for 2000-01. Under the Criminal Justice Act, the principal functions of the committee are to monitor and review the discharge of the functions of the Criminal Justice Commission and report to parliament. The committee's annual report outlines how it has discharged those functions during the year.

As the chairman of the committee, I wish to acknowledge the dedicated and valuable contribution made by the members of the committee and the committee staff throughout the year. As the report year includes a period of activity of the PCJC of the previous parliament, I also wish to acknowledge the similar contribution by members and staff of that committee. I commend the committee's annual report to the House.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Ombudsman Bill

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (10.30 a.m.): For the information of the House, I table a letter dated 18 September 2001 from the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee to the Premier regarding the discussion draft Ombudsman Bill 2001.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.31 a.m.): I lay upon the table of the House the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 6 2001* and move that it be printed.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Freedom of Information**

Mr HORAN (10.31 a.m.): I refer the Premier to the plan of his government to introduce time based costing for the processing of FOI applications at the rate of \$20 per hour. Given that access to government-held documentation is meant to be a statutory right of every person under the FOI legislation, is this not effectively an accountability tax under his secret state obsession, making FOI the privilege of the financially able? Also, in the interests of democracy and in the interests of openness and accountability, will the Premier exempt the opposition from this fee?

Mr BEATTIE: If an individual makes an application under FOI for information relating to that individual, it is free, it is free, it is free, it is free. That is the first thing.

Secondly, the FOI process, which we support, works. All one has to do is look at the amount of information provided under FOI now to know that it works. FOI is costing in the vicinity of \$7.5 million to \$8 million. We are not prepared to see that money pulled out of the Health budget. We are not prepared to see that money pulled out of the Education budget. We are not prepared to see that money pulled out of police, ambulance or fire services.

Basically, we are saying that organisations—not individuals—that can afford to pay should pay. It is very simple. Let us take some of the multi-million dollar organisations that are making FOI applications. If we go to the people of Queensland and say, 'Should those multi-million dollar organisations pay a real price for FOI or should the taxpayer pay it out of the Health budget?', Queenslanders will say that the multi-million dollar organisations—and some of them are multinationals—should pay. All we want is a fair go to ensure that the Health budget is not sucked dry by FOI and the Education budget is not sucked dry by FOI.

Let us talk about what we are doing. We are empowering FOI officers to get to a stage where they can negotiate with applicants to get a more realistic assessment of what they really want. Instead of fishing expeditions that cost the taxpayer a fortune, we want to finetune the process. That helps everyone. It saves the taxpayer money and, secondly, it means that the applicants get what they want.

In the long term, a charge of \$20 an hour—and an assessment will be made in the early stages to assist the applicant—is a fair charge. It is a fair thing. After all, many people argue for user pays. This is a fair thing. There are hardship provisions in the legislation. That means that if organisations cannot afford it, that will be examined.

In terms of the question raised by the Leader of the Opposition, as he knows, every year there is a budgetary process. Every year he is allocated an appropriate budget through the system. Clearly, this would be one of the matters that we would examine as part of that budgetary process. We do not believe that the opposition should be disadvantaged. We believe that it should have access to FOI under reasonable circumstances. We would consider that as part of the budget. The Leader of the Opposition does not need to be concerned about that. I am happy to discuss the matter with him.

Let us come back to the issue: this government has been the most open and accountable government in the history of Queensland. We will remain that way.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the Leader of the Opposition, I welcome to the public gallery students from Brisbane Boys Grammar and a group of German exchange students whom they are hosting.

Member for Dickson, Stamp Duty

Mr HORAN: My second question is to the Honourable Treasurer. I refer to the Treasurer's move to muzzle the Stamp Duty Commissioner from speaking to the media about revelations that the federal member for Dickson enjoyed a \$5,000 tax discount when she purchased her luxury Gold Coast unit. Will the Treasurer confirm that all applicants for concessions on stamp duty for

principal places of residence must meet the legislative requirement that they move into the premises within six months of purchase and live there for six consecutive months? Will he table in parliament the reasons behind the granting of the stamp duty concession in this case?

Mr MACKENROTH: I take objection to the comment made by the Leader of the Opposition that I muzzled the Stamp Duty Commissioner. I have not discussed this with the Stamp Duty Commissioner at all.

I would like to draw the attention of all members to section 10.1 of the Stamp Act regarding disclosure of information. It states—

Except as provided in this section and the *Revenue Laws (Reciprocal Powers) Act 1988*, a person shall not disclose information or publish a record obtained by that or another person in connection with the administration of this Act, unless the disclosure or publication is made—

- (a) with the consent ... of the person to whose affairs the information or record relates; or
- (b) in connection with the administration of this Act; or
- (c) for the purpose of any legal proceedings (including any report thereon) arising out of this Act.

Maximum penalty—100 penalty units or imprisonment for 6 months.

I am certain that the Stamp Duty Commissioner does not need me or anyone else to tell him what his responsibilities are under the Stamp Act, that is, that he should not disclose information in relation to individuals to either the parliament or the media. The media has been ringing my office asking for information. They expect that I should be able to give them information. I have not asked the Stamp Duty Commissioner for information. I would not do it in relation to any person.

In relation to the question about the six months eligibility, the Stamp Duties Office has published a practice direction, stamp duty PD33.1, which sets out the responsibilities of people when claiming the concession. As the member would be aware from when he made an application for such a concession when he bought his residence, that application is made by the person purchasing the home when they make the stamp duty application. If the commissioner becomes aware of any information relating to the declaration that is made, it is the Stamp Duty Commissioner's responsibility to investigate the matter. That is not something that I would be involved in, nor is it something that I should be involved in.

The Stamp Duty Commissioner has a statutory obligation to implement this act. As a politician, I should not be involved in it. Whilst the media and the opposition may want me to release information in relation to one individual now, I will not do it. Likewise, I will not release such information in relation to individuals from the opposite side of politics when those matters are raised.

Hoax Mail

Mr TERRY SULLIVAN: I thank the Speaker for the new crest, which he has just given to honourable members. I ask the Premier: in light of yesterday's incidents across the state with respect to suspect mail, could he inform the House as to the state's response?

Mr BEATTIE: This is a very important matter. This morning I wish to report to the House that, as at 9 a.m., a total of 41 official reports had been received from members of the public concerning suspicious articles. There were 19 overnight. There are already reports of more this morning. Police are investigating all cases and, as at 9 a.m., 11 had been confirmed safe. Police are continuing their investigations into the remaining articles as a matter of urgency.

I am pleased to report that the response mechanism of this state has worked well and is well coordinated. A major incident room was established under the command of Acting Detective Chief Superintendent John Curtin. Operation Latch was promptly put in place. Operation Latch involves support from the police, health and emergency services departments. Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson briefed cabinet twice yesterday and myself and the Minister for Police and senior officials late yesterday and again this morning.

The professionalism of the state's response teams is to the fore, and the public can have every confidence in them. All state departments were advised promptly and given details on how to deal with suspect parcels. Anyone with suspicions about parcels is asked to call 3364 6464.

Yesterday's response was in line with the preparedness for last year's Sydney Olympics and CHOGM. A lot of the work done for CHOGM held us in good stead to deal with the issues yesterday.

I take this opportunity to remind people that a penalty of up to seven years exists for people who engage in hoax activity and, under different sections, it can be as high as 10 years. The seven-year penalty is under section 239 of the Criminal Code. A life penalty exists for a person transmitting lethal substances.

This is an opportune time to call for anyone with information to call Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000. I remind members and all present that anyone with concerns about posted material should not handle it; they should isolate it, secure it and call the police immediately. Every effort is being made to sustain and ensure public safety.

I appeal to all Queenslanders and Australians to be very careful about how they address envelopes and to make certain that they are sensible about what they send through the mail. We do not want to see any more people alarmed. The world is jittery; people will naturally feel jittery. Under those circumstances, people will lodge complaints. We simply ask for those acting in good faith to continue to do that. We do warn anyone involved in copycatting. We will not tolerate copycats or hoaxers. The full force of the law will be used against anyone involved in hoaxes.

People should not be reluctant to come forward. We want to quieten this down. We do not want any hysteria and we do not want a state of panic. People need to feel reassured. They should feel confident in coming forward if they have a concern. We are not a highly targeted or high-risk area, but we cannot take anything for granted. It is better to be overcautious than sorry. We are asking for calm and commonsense. But if anyone has any concerns, they should immediately raise them with the police. They should isolate the article, raise the matter with the police, and the appropriate action will be taken.

Lang Park Trust

Mr JOHNSON: I refer the Treasurer to the Lang Park Trust, which has a mandatory obligation under section 9 of the Lang Park Trust Act 1994 to manage Lang Park in accordance with sound commercial principles and to produce an annual cash surplus over operating costs and committed debt repayment. Financial figures listed in the 1998 Lang Park annual report and the certified statement from the Queensland Audit Office show that the Lang Park Trust had operating losses of \$1,348,985 in 1996, \$2,192,661 in 1997, \$1,859,305 in 1998, and \$1,043,576 in 1999. Given that the reporting period for the Lang Park Trust financial statements changed from December 1999 to the end of the financial year in June, it is now 18 months since the Lang Park Trust provided any financial accounting. I ask: does the Treasurer know the current financial state of the Lang Park Trust and when will the Lang Park Trust audit for the last 18 months be available?

Mr MACKENROTH: Firstly, I acknowledge the figures and also what is in the Lang Park Trust Act. But I am sure that the member would be aware that it is fairly difficult to make a profit when you do not have any activities at a venue. That is one of the reasons why we have undertaken the redevelopment of Suncorp Metway, namely, to ensure that we have a modern stadium that is able to host football games and that we actually do have tenants there playing football, which was not happening before. The audited statements for the Lang Park Trust will be tabled once I have received them.

Australian Magnesium Corporation

Mr PEARCE: I refer the Premier to last night's announcement that the Australian Magnesium Corporation has returned to the market with a new public offer seeking to raise \$525 million to fund construction of the Stanwell magnesium refinery, and I ask: can he please advise the House what action this government has taken to keep this vitally important project on track?

Mr BEATTIE: I thank the honourable member for the question and I note his interest in the subject, along with that of the member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Public Works. This is a great project for Queensland, because it uses local technology in a value-adding process to transform Queensland minerals into light metal—the material of the 21st century. The Queensland government has worked hard with AMC, its brokers and banks and the federal government to get this vital project over the line. On many occasions in recent days and weeks there has been a series of meetings involving the Treasurer, the Minister for State Development and me to get this project up. I am delighted to see it return to the market.

The state government, the federal government and Stanwell Corporation have all provided additional support in this raising, which has enabled AMC to redesign its offer and return it to the

stock market. While I see this as a great opportunity to invest in the future of Queensland, investors should, of course, consult their financial advisers about participating in this exciting new project prior to investing.

We are talking about the establishment of the world's largest magnesium plant—the birth of a vast new industry with thousands of new jobs for Queensland. It could trigger \$4.5 billion worth of investment in Central Queensland over the next 15 years, creating up to 7,000 jobs in this important region of our state. This project is a strong example of the Smart State approach.

Importantly, there are contracts to local engineering firms and suppliers totalling \$750 million that are ready to be let should this raising be successful. That will be a massive boost to local industry and jobs in Queensland.

I believe it is important that we inform honourable members and the people of Queensland of the involvement of governments and their agencies in this project. The Commonwealth government has provided \$50 million through a CSIRO facility towards commercialisation of the technology, and a \$100 million loan guarantee. Stanwell Corporation has provided a \$70 million cost overrun facility repayable on a fully commercial basis, and an \$8 million working capital injection to be repaid on completion of the raising. If the raising is not successful, Stanwell will have recourse to AMC assets, including the pilot plant and its unique technology.

The state government has supported the project in the following ways—

- a \$50 million infrastructure package, recovered through user charges;
- a subordinated loan of up to \$100 million to be recovered on a fully commercial basis;
- a further facility of up to \$28 million to be immediately recovered through underwritten oversubscriptions, proceeds from the reinvestment of distribution payments and a number of other avenues.

I emphasise that if the equity raising is not successful, most elements of this package will not proceed. Only Stanwell would be exposed to a maximum amount of \$8 million. This exposure has been secured with a first right of call against the assets of AMC.

The commercial interests of Stanwell Corporation are considerably enhanced if the refinery goes ahead, and the board of the corporation has decided it is worth providing support to maximise the chance of that happening.

I table a news release and I seek to incorporate a letter in *Hansard* written to me by Dr J. Roland Williams in relation to this magnesium project so that the House is fully informed.

Leave granted.

Australian Magnesium Corporation Limited

15 October 2001

The Hon Peter Beattie, MP

Premier QLD

15th Floor

Executive Building

100 George Street

Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Premier

I am writing to inform you that Australian Magnesium Corporation Limited (AMC) has today announced its capital raising plans for the development of the \$1.3 billion Stanwell Magnesium Project in Central Queensland and lodged a prospectus with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission for an offer up to \$525 million.

AMC is pleased to be returning to the market with a smaller, revised equity offering which we believe is priced and structured to meet investor demand for stability and growth.

The financing package has been made possible with the participation of the Commonwealth Government, the Queensland Government and AMC's major shareholder Normandy Mining Limited whose commitments have significantly enhanced the Stanwell finance package.

Upon completion of the capital raising in late November, we expect to begin site works at Stanwell in early 2002, start project commissioning in 2003 and commence magnesium production in October 2004.

About 1,350 construction jobs will be created during the peak development stage in 2002-2003, with 350 people expected to operate a fully commissioned plant.

Please find attached a copy of the announcement that we have made to the Australian Stock Exchange and please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information or would like to discuss any aspect of the Company or its offer.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Roland Williams

Dr J. Roland Williams CBE

Chairman

Goods and Services Tax

Mr QUINN: I refer the Treasurer to the fact that the GST is a tax that is returned 100 per cent to the states and thus any roll back of the GST is a reduction in funding for Queensland, and I ask: what is the expected impact on Queensland of the already announced ALP roll back proposals? Will state taxes have to be raised or new taxes introduced to compensate for the revenue shortfall or, alternatively, will state programs be cut?

Mr MACKENROTH: There is no effect. No state programs will be cut because under the agreement which was signed a guaranteed amount will be paid to us.

Goodwill Bridge

Mr PURCELL: I refer the Premier to the state government's construction of the Goodwill Bridge and the publicity it has received in the media, and I ask him: has it been well received by the public?

Mr BEATTIE: The answer is yes, it has been. Our latest bridge is already living up to its name, the Goodwill Bridge. Apart from the name reflecting Queenslanders' friendly nature and the goodwill they show to fellow Australians and international tourists, it is already a popular one. Of the 1,221 nominations in our Name the Bridge Competition and from among the 840 different names offered, 81 chose the Goodwill Bridge or a variation of it. So it was the most popular choice. It was also no surprise, considering the huge success of the recent Goodwill Games.

While bridges obviously span divided elements, their most important role is to unite. For reasons beyond our control and because of actions taken by international terrorists who seek to damage our international community, Her Majesty the Queen was not here for our naming ceremony. However, as I said, bridges play a role in bringing people together, in uniting.

On 8 October State Development Minister Tom Barton and I officially named the bridge the Goodwill Bridge. We were joined by those who successfully chose its name. The Goodwill Bridge forms part of a grand design to return the city to the people, to create a network of walkways and parks that breathe life into the city centre and unite people in making greater use of the river and its surrounding natural beauty. We have South Bank and Roma Street Parkland, we are planning walkways around the river banks, and we intend to create further green spaces in the inner-city region that will be linked by pedestrian and cycle paths. This is about a new heart for Brisbane. We are building a new city heart to make Brisbane the most attractive tourism destination possible.

This latest addition, to be officially opened on Sunday, 21 October—this Sunday—differs from all the other structures connecting the city's localities because it is intended for use by pedestrians and cyclists only and not at all for motor vehicles. So it is family friendly, it is people friendly and it is children friendly. Such an addition will only enhance the city's status as one of the world's most attractive, pleasant and unified livable cities. Indeed, it is the world's most livable city. It is all about bringing people together.

Sunday's opening should indeed be special. It will be a day for the whole city family to enjoy, with parties on the bridge and on either side, ensuring a fun festival atmosphere. Part of the celebrations include our world's best swimmers, surf-lifesavers and triathletes taking part in the special feature race from the Victoria Bridge to the Goodwill Bridge. Thus far Grant Hackett, Leisel Jones, Ky and Dane Hurst and Loretta Harrop have shown an interest in the race.

I am also pleased to detail that the unique and innovative bridge has passed its load test with an A1 grading. According to QUT load testing, even if the Goodwill Bridge is jam packed with people watching a fireworks display, it will be absolutely safe. We are continuing to create a united city—united by its magnificent river and another special bridge, the Goodwill Bridge. This is about putting Brisbane and Queensland on the international stage. We have taken a bit of criticism about this bridge, but it is worth every dollar.

Nambour Hospital Birthing Unit

Miss SIMPSON: I refer the Minister for Health to serious public concerns about longstanding problems affecting mothers using the Nambour Hospital birthing unit and to her refusal, based on the FOI deadline being missed yesterday, to release important information relating to the unit. I ask: can the minister advise the House what action she has taken to implement an independent

inquiry—which is clearly warranted—into the very real concerns about the Nambour Hospital birthing unit?

Mrs EDMOND: I am aware that the member runs around trying to whip up hysteria about Nambour Hospital birthing practices. As somebody who has had three children, I can attest to the fact that birthing is different every time. Some outcomes are really good. Unfortunately, other outcomes are not what people expect or hope for. Our sympathy goes out to those people who have not had a good outcome.

The cases of concern at Nambour have been investigated. In fact, if the member for Toowoomba South were here he would be able to tell honourable members that some of the people who raised concerns during his time did not take up the opportunity to follow them up with the Health Rights Commission or put them forward. I understand that, as a result of a public notice calling for people who have concerns to put them to the Chief Health Officer, two concerns—one in writing and one via the telephone—have been put forward to the Chief Health Officer. This covers an enormous period during which thousands and thousands of women at Nambour have had wonderful outcomes, some of whom have written me letters full of praise for the staff.

Of the issues that have been raised, there has been no apparent connecting factor, nothing that shows anything other than unfortunate incidents with individual patients. So there is no need for the member opposite to go around trying to create hysteria, frightening women from going to the Nambour Hospital.

Miss SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. The minister's comments are offensive and untrue. We have asked for an independent inquiry so that the very real concerns are dealt with in a compassionate way.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! We do not need a debate.

Mrs EDMOND: We have called for people who have concerns to contact the Health Department. As I said, there have been two—one oral and one written. As a result of a recent activity, a couple of people have also contacted the Health Rights Commission and those cases will be fully investigated independently.

As I said, the women of Nambour need to be reassured. They should read the letters in the paper from the women who have had wonderful outcomes there. They should be reassured by the statistics out of Nambour Hospital, which are on a par with probably anywhere in the Western World. It is unfortunate that for a very tiny percentage of people birthing is difficult, birthing outcomes are not what they expect. Our sympathy goes out to those people. But the fact that decisions about individual patients have to be made by clinicians at the time is a matter for their concern. Nothing that has been presented to me indicates that there is any necessity for an inquiry.

Regional Development

Mr MULHERIN: I ask the Minister for State Development: could he advise what the government is doing to help develop the regions, in particular, Central Queensland in the Mackay-Rockhampton area?

Mr BARTON: I thank the member for the question because last month I travelled through Central Queensland, including the member's electorate of Mackay, to look at a range of issues that are occurring there. While I was in Rockhampton, before moving on to Mackay, I presented Rockhampton's Institute of Sustainable Regional Development with a cheque for \$100,000. It is the final milestone payment to the Central Queensland University, which controls that body, and is part of a \$600,000 1998 election commitment of the Beattie Labor government. That institute aims to build a prosperous future for the Central Queensland region. We are looking at regional restructuring that does not place unrealistic pressure on natural resources. That institute will address issues such as water and land use management and planning for future changes in industries in the Fitzroy Basin and further into the Mackay area.

While I was in Rockhampton I was also pleased to announce a \$125,000 state funding grant to Rockhampton Enterprise Limited. It is one of five regional economic development corporations. The others are located in Mackay, Cairns, Townsville and Gladstone. They are an interface between those communities and the Queensland government with regard to regional development planning. That payment was also part of a 1998 election commitment to provide

three-year core funding to these bodies of \$250,000 per year, totalling \$750,000. We will be continuing to make those types of grants to those bodies because it is absolutely crucial that we get proper regional development in Queensland. It is part of an overall \$11 million commitment to assist regional development organisations.

When in Rockhampton I also announced that there is a further \$32,000 grant under QIDS funding to Rockhampton firms. That is part of \$605,000 that has gone into Rockhampton small businesses since the Beattie Labor government came to office as part of the QIDS program. I travelled through Central Queensland when I visited Rockhampton. I went to Mackay and met with local authorities and industry organisations such as the Sugar Research Institute to have a good look at the high calibre of what this region has to offer. I was very pleased to be in the electorate of the member for Mackay, because there are very good organisations there that have significant greenfield development opportunities in agriculture, resources and manufacturing, and while I was there the member for Mackay directed me to look at some world's best practice in terms of manufacturing. This is all about helping Queensland's businesses. It is about regional development. It is about sustainable regional development. This government is getting on with the job.

Regional Health Services

Ms LEE LONG: I refer the Minister for Health to her statements during the last sitting of parliament that the people of Queensland should, whether they can afford it or not, attend private GP clinics and not services at public hospitals and that therefore they should pay the difference between what the doctor charges and the Medicare refund. The minister also stated that public hospitals are there for emergencies and acute in-patient care only. I ask: when is the minister going to widely advertise this policy so the people of Queensland know what the Beattie Labor government stands for on public health and public hospitals?

Mrs EDMOND: That is a total misrepresentation of anything I have ever said, but I did say that the Commonwealth government does not fund us to provide GP services in hospitals. It tells us that these services are funded by the Commonwealth under Medicare and it accepts that there is a difference between the rebate and what the doctors charge. The doctors are allowed to charge whatever they like. There is a recommended fee. There is an AMA recommended fee, but both of those are just recommended. The doctors can charge what they like.

What Queensland does do and has done under this government more than ever before is provide services and pick up the cost of providing GP services right around this state where there are no GPs. However, people complain about having to wait at the emergency department for GP type presentations. What I am saying to the member is that in many states hospitals do not provide that service. We do. We do not turn people away. No-one is turned away from a Queensland Health service. We accept that there will be some people who say, 'I can't afford to go to a GP.' There are some places where there are no GPs and the only service is provided by the hospital.

What we do say to people is that the Queensland state government is picking up about \$100 million in extra costs by providing GP services that the Commonwealth does not provide. Again, what I am saying—and I will say it over and over again—is that the Commonwealth tells us that it does not provide hospital GP services. It tells us that the funding is not for GP services, and that is an issue that has to be taken up with the Commonwealth. I would actually like to see seamless health services so all services are provided by one level of government, and I would suggest that that should be the state government. A lot of confusion and cost shifting occurs because of the problem—and I see Mike Horan nodding—of the state and Commonwealth both providing funding.

Mr Horan: I was going to sleep.

Mr Mackenroth: You were thinking about nodding though.

Mrs EDMOND: Maybe you just have a wobbly chin, Mike. Maybe that is the problem. When the Commonwealth government provides funding but does not provide any actual services it causes problems in cost shifting. That is a major issue. It is a problem to us. I would rather spend the \$100 million on not providing GP services and having the Commonwealth provide those services adequately and spend that money on other health services in this state. But as long as we are here and as long as there is a need, it is our policy to provide those services.

Tourism Industry, Cairns

Ms BOYLE: My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Racing and Minister for Fair Trading. Tourism is Queensland's second largest industry and biggest employer. The Ansett collapse and terrorist strikes in the United States have had a devastating impact on tourism across the globe, and I must say it has shaken the industry in Cairns. I ask: can the minister outline the Beattie government's response to the crisis?

Mrs ROSE: I thank the member for the question and acknowledge her commitment to the tourism industry in Cairns. She regularly takes the opportunity to talk to me about various tourism related issues in Cairns. She joined with me last Friday when we met with key industry leaders and operators to talk about the impact of the double-whammy effects of the collapse of Ansett and also the terrorist attacks on the United States. This government values tourism and the contribution that tourism operators and their staff make to the state's economy. That is why we moved immediately to cushion the double whammy of the Ansett collapse and terrorist fallout. We announced a marketing campaign with a value of \$4.1 million to run until Christmas with the aim of boosting domestic tourism.

Yesterday, the Premier announced a six-point plan that will provide much-needed relief to the industry. It includes \$10 million for low interest loans for struggling small tourism and related businesses. The plan also includes the establishment of a tourism and related industries immediate response group, government agencies to investigate the capacity of programs to be directed towards assisting tourism operators and businesses, addressing employment and training issues and encouraging financial institutions to consider offering temporary relief for clients directly affected by recent events, and the Premier will urge the Commonwealth to adopt a more interventionist approach in its response to the industry's plight. Tourism is worth an estimated \$14 billion a year to the Queensland economy. It also employs around 150,000 Queenslanders. We are determined to help the industry bounce back as quickly as possible. We will protect tourism jobs. The package sends a clear message to the industry that we are here to help.

The industry has welcomed our response. Last week I spent three days on a fact-finding mission on the Sunshine Coast, Mackay and the Whitsundays, Townsville, Cairns and Port Douglas. The industry reported a massive loss of business and a bleak outlook for jobs if the situation continues. Impacts on business ranged from around 20 per cent up to 80 per cent of lost business. Losses were estimated to average between 25 per cent and 30 per cent. Operators trying desperately to retain staff by cutting hours rather than retrenching them were unsure how long they could absorb the shock. I was told some businesses were already on the brink of ruin. At every meeting I heard how disappointed the industry was with the federal government's response. Comments ranged from the federal package being 'a drop in the ocean' to 'an insult to the industry'. The federal government has offered just \$15 million in relief for the whole of Australia.

Prostitution

Mr SEENEY: I refer the Minister for Police and Corrective Services to the changes he announced to the prostitution regulations yesterday in an attempt to get more brothels established in Queensland. I ask: what is the minister's target for the establishment of brothels in Queensland and how many will he consider to be enough?

Mr McGRADY: The Queensland government has no target for any number of brothels in this state. But let me say this: the reason the government introduced legalised brothels in this state was all about community safety and community health for the workers and their clients—nothing more, nothing less. When I became the minister, I had discussions with a number of organisations—in fact, all the key stakeholders, including the CJC, the police and the Local Government Association. As a result of those discussions and negotiations, cabinet has approved a number of changes, and I consider two of those changes to be important. The first change concerns the type of person who can apply for a licence. The decision as to whether or not those people get licences is not the government's; it is not the Premier's; it is not mine—it is left to the Prostitution Licensing Authority. The second point is that the will of this parliament is being frustrated by one or two councils around this state. As I said before, this matter is about community health and community safety.

We have proposed a number of changes. Last night it was quite interesting to see on television one clip of the Leader of the Opposition saying that local government will not wear this

legislation and another of Mr Greg Hallam, who occupies probably the highest position in local government in this state, saying that the Queensland Local Government Association welcomes the legislation. He went on to say, 'The changes today will certainly assist.' Once again, everybody is out of step except the Queensland opposition.

Townsville Hospital

Ms PHILLIPS: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. The beautiful new Townsville Hospital in Douglas began admitting patients last week. This was welcomed by the local community. I ask the minister: is any new equipment included with this new building?

Mrs EDMOND: I thank the honourable member for the question. I certainly understand why the vast majority of North Queensland residents have been pleased with the new hospital at Douglas. I also pay tribute to the staff, who over the last week have been moving patients over—not only well patients and new admissions but also intensive care babies from Kirwan Hospital—without a hitch. It is an exercise that requires military-type precision and it has been given enormous support. The staff are doing it incredibly well.

I know that the member for Mundingburra, along with the members for Townsville and Thuringowa, will support me when I say that, while these new facilities are tremendous, it is the continuing dedication and skills of our staff that really make the difference. Certainly I hope that the new facilities will help to attract staff to Townsville, because there has been a longstanding recruitment problem.

The new hospital, on a 29-hectare parcel near James Cook University, with its new school of medicine, offers a range of health services over 63,000 square metres of floor space. This compares with a combined floor space of 45,000 square metres at the old Townsville General Hospital and Kirwan Women's Hospital.

The move to the new hospital, which began last week and continues this week, is a major undertaking which has required detailed planning and military-type precision. New equipment in the hospital at Douglas includes a gamma camera and digital chest X-ray mobile image intensifier worth \$1.28 million; a \$1.3 million single phase cardiac catheter laboratory with electrophysiology capacity; and a \$1.8 million state-of-the-art CT scanner. Radiotherapy services have also been enhanced with one new and one upgraded linear accelerator, and there is sufficient capacity to commission a third linear accelerator if required.

The new Townsville Hospital combines the health care services of both Townsville General Hospital and Kirwan Hospital for Women into one facility providing a more patient focused approach to the delivery of health care. The \$181 million hospital is part of the \$2.8 billion Statewide Health Building Program, which started in 1993 as a dream of the then Goss Labor government and has continued and provided redeveloped health services and facilities right throughout Queensland from the Torres Strait in the north to the southern border.

Mr A. Tooth, Dairyfarmers

Mr HOPPER: Is the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities aware that the general manager of Dairyfarmers' farmer owned cooperative, Mr Alan Tooth, took a \$1 million bonus this year, while the cooperative will make only \$770,000 profit and will not pay a dividend to farmers? If the minister is aware of it, could he please tell the House his thoughts on this matter?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I can appreciate the reason the honourable member has asked this question. That bonus payment of course, in plain words, is quite ridiculous considering the fact that our dairy farmers, especially the members of the Dairyfarmers cooperative, have undergone such drastic changes to their income and to their lifestyle. The fact that the Dairyfarmers cooperative was able to post only a very small profit leads me to believe that the payment that was issued to Alan Tooth is ridiculous. If this man had any decency, he would do the right thing by the cooperative and refund some of that bonus payment. It has been the Dairyfarmers cooperative that has really been taking it out on our dairy farmers, who have had to fight tooth and nail at every step to try to get increased pricing.

In Queensland, milk production has dropped by about 10 per cent because many of our dairy farmers—by that I mean dairy farmers from within the Dairyfarmers cooperative—have left the industry. I suspect that all honourable members in this House would consider bonus payments of this nature to be obscene.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I welcome to the public gallery members of the Bribie Island Probus club.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Dinosaur Discovery

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT: I refer the Minister for The Arts to the recent major dinosaur discovery near Winton, and I ask: how significant is this discovery for Queensland?

Mr FOLEY: As Godzilla taught us, size does matter. Elliot the sauropod from Winton is the biggest dinosaur ever discovered in Australia. It is the biggest news to hit Queensland in 95 million years. In dinosaur State of Origin, Elliot is the biggest prop forward in the league. This gigantic animal, a sauropod which roamed western Queensland 95 million years ago, is the largest ever discovered in Australia. This is a great coup for the Queensland Museum. It reaffirms the Queensland Museum as the centre for dinosaur studies in Australia and Queensland as the home—

Mr Beattie: Has he joined the National Party yet?

Mr FOLEY: I know that the National Party is a home for dinosaurs, too, but the Queensland Museum is a place of scientific expertise. This find also reaffirms Queensland as the home of the country's largest and most important dinosaur finds. It is an extremely exciting find, and more work will be done to establish the full extent of the discovery and to study the animal in detail.

The fossilised remains of this massive dinosaur were discovered in 1999 on a remote sheep station near Winton. The name of the grazier and the location of the discovery will be kept secret to protect the site from unscrupulous collectors. Elliot the dinosaur would have stretched the length of five cars and would have been able to look in the window of a second floor apartment.

Mr Beattie: And been able to join the National Party.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the Premier for his insight. Sauropods were gigantic, four-legged, plant-eating dinosaurs characterised by extremely long necks and tails and disproportionately small heads.

Mr Beattie: I rest my case.

Mr FOLEY: I thank the Premier for his insights into palaeontology. The discovery of Elliot finally disproves the theory that vegetarianism stunts growth. The scientists have so far found part of a thigh bone, ribs and a portion of the backbone. With a total length of 1.5 to 1.7 metres the complete thigh bone would have been as tall as a family fridge.

Just a couple of months ago I was in Richmond in order to open Kronosaurus Korner. What that drives home, of course, is that dinosaurs mean jobs. Up there in Richmond, Kronosaurus Korner offers the visitor the opportunity to see marine dinosaurs, and people are coming from far and near to have that experience. Indeed, it is supported through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network, which is an important initiative of this government, together with the Commonwealth.

Local Government, Brothel Applications

Mr HOBBS: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government and Planning. State and local governments have worked together for many years to introduce the integrated planning process to give councils greater autonomy and greater community involvement in planning decisions. Now the government has decided to appoint its very own pimp to override decisions of democratically elected councils that refuse brothel applications because, according to the Police Minister, some councils have a policy of refusing them. Which councils have refused brothel applications? How many have been refused? How many brothels in how many communities will it take for the government to not need the services of this new appointee?

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: I do not have those figures with me, but I can say that I have had wide discussions with local government and with the LGAQ on this issue. Local councils throughout Queensland recognise the need for legislation regarding—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked the question.

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: Local government right throughout Queensland—

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrego!

Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM: Local governments right throughout Queensland are aware of the need for responsibility and the need to address prostitution through legislation which has been introduced by this government. However, they have been reluctant to pass and even address approvals for a couple of different reasons; firstly, because of the narrow thinking of some of their members. We often hear that narrow thinking from the opposition benches. Secondly, there has been a desire by some members in local government to play politics on this issue, to take the high moral ground and, therefore, to make it very difficult for their councils to address these applications.

The amendment that the Minister for Police is putting before this House will be debated in the coming weeks. It will address a number of the issues that local governments are concerned about, and I am sure that we can look forward to the support of all members opposite for that legislation.

Heritage Grants

Mr LIVINGSTONE: I ask the Minister for Environment: can the minister outline to the House what grants are available in Queensland for the preservation of our cultural and local heritage?

Mr WELLS: A few days ago I went out to a little cottage called Strathearn, where I announced the \$250,000 cultural heritage grants program for this year. That little cottage is very significant. It was built as an Anzac cottage for Private John Warner, who was seriously injured in the battle of Ypres during World War I. When he returned, he lived for a short time in that cottage with his family, but he did not live long as a result of the serious and sustained injuries that he suffered on behalf of his country.

After his death the cottage was handed down to his daughter, Florence Handley, who lived there for many years. Her husband was on the Burma railway—a prisoner of war of the Japanese during World War II. He died, but she continued to live there until recently. That cottage is still in the hands of the same family. It is thought to be the only Anzac cottage still intact. A sum of \$5,000 went to restumping of the cottage to help to preserve the cultural heritage of Queensland.

So it is not just in the grandiloquent architecture of great mansions, nor in sweeping landscapes, that the history of Queensland is told. It is told also in the humble abodes and in the humble lives of those Queenslanders who have lived day-to-day existences and served their country in less loud and less outspoken ways than those who lived in the mansions.

These cultural heritage grants are available for other projects. I might mention the cultural heritage surveys for the Jericho and Laidley shires—the stamping ground of Bill Gunn, for whom we moved a condolence motion today; the restoration of the Laidley bakery, which contains the original brick ovens; a book recording the language of the Wangerriburra/Yugumbah people of south-east Queensland; and the conservation plan for St Patrick's Church in Fortitude Valley. These kinds of programs are supported by the Queensland government and the Department of Environment to preserve our heritage.

Mr Schwarten: There's one in Rockhampton. You forgot that one—\$200,000.

Mr WELLS: I understand there is a \$200,000 program in Rockhampton—and indeed, right around the state.

If you do not know where you came from then you do not know where you are, and the preservation of our heritage is an important program of this government.

Goods and Services Tax

Dr WATSON: I refer the Treasurer to budget statement No. 2 for 2001-02 and, in particular, page 32, which gives projections for the general government GSF net operating result for the years up to and including 2004-05, which includes of course the expected Commonwealth payments, and I ask: will Queensland receive the same expected amounts under Beazley's roll-back scheme for the years beyond 2001-02 when Queensland's guaranteed minimum amount is less than the expected GST receipts? And, if so, what is the basis for the guarantee?

Mr MACKENROTH: In relation to the out years, when the Beazley government is elected we will negotiate with them to ensure that we get the amounts that are guaranteed and that the funding which would rightly be coming to Queensland will continue to come here. I will ensure, as the Treasurer, that we get it.

Baffle Creek Fish Habitat Area

Mr STRONG: I refer the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities to the recent declaration of a fish habitat area covering approximately 2,000 hectares of habitats in the tidal reaches of the Baffle Creek system north of Bundaberg and in the Burnett electorate. I ask the minister: how does the Baffle Creek fish habitat area benefit the Burnett region, and are there further declarations proposed?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I thank the honourable member for the question. As the member for Burnett for the past seven months—

Mr Beattie: Nearly eight—eight tomorrow.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Eight months tomorrow. I thank the Premier. He has been constantly on my back to declare the Baffle Creek fish habitat area. He has also told me—although I have not been there—that Baffle Creek is regarded as one of southern Queensland's most pristine estuaries.

The declaration of the Baffle Creek fish habitat area will ensure that the high-quality fish habitats are maintained and protected from future degradation. The extensive marine plant, sand bar, narrow creek and rocky outcrop habitats within the Baffle Creek fish habitat area function as a nursery, feeding and spawning grounds for a variety of species of importance to the recreational, commercial and traditional fishing sectors. Some of the fish found there are barramundi, mangrove jack, flathead, whiting, bream, prawns and mud crabs.

The declaration of a fish habitat area does not impose constraints on legal fishing activities or day-to-day community use of the area. However, there are constraints on development while maintaining fish habitats as a public resource accessible for public use. In general, the only new development allowed in a fish habitat area is public infrastructure which is directly related to fisheries based activities such as public jetties and boat ramps. The declaration of a fish habitat area involved considerable negotiations with stakeholders to determine suitable boundary locations and awareness of future management arrangements.

Queensland now has 74 declared fish habitat areas covering more than 710,000 hectares. I can announce today that a further five fish habitat areas covering 160,000 hectares are proposed for declaration over the next 12 to 18 months. The proposed fish habitat areas are in the Elliott River south of Bundaberg, the Fitzroy River in the Rockhampton region, Edgumbe Bay near Bowen, the Annan River near Cooktown and the Starcke River just north of Cooktown. The Queensland government is committed to protecting fish habitats and the marine environment.

Local Government, Liability Claims

Mr SPRINGBORG: I refer the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to the recent decision of the High Court which has overturned the convention of nonfeasance which is applied generally to local government and other government agencies with regard to injuries that are incurred by individuals in accidents, or whatever the case may be. Will the Attorney-General indicate to the House today what progress the government has made with regard to correcting this High Court decision, because I think he would very much appreciate the significant cost risks which will have implications not only for local government but also for other government agencies?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Unfortunately, the time for questions has expired.

PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

The Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the dates indicated—

14 September 2001—

Mt Gravatt Showgrounds Trust—Annual Report 1 May 2000 to 30 April 2001

Report by the Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy (Mrs Edmond) under section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992

20 September 2001—

Queensland Treasury Corporation—Annual Report 2000-2001

Report by the Minister for Environment (Mr Wells) under section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992

21 September 2001—

Criminal Justice Commission Report—Funding Justice: Legal Aid and Public Prosecutions in Queensland
Report of the Attorney-General to the Legislative Assembly under section 10 of the Attorney-General Act 1999 dealing with an application by Mr Ian Olsson for the grant of a fiat
Two Reports of the Attorney-General to the Legislative Assembly under section 10 of the Attorney-General Act 1999 dealing with applications by Mr Terry Sharples for the grant of a fiat

24 September 2001—

Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority—Annual Report 2000-2001

25 September 2001—

Report by the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities (Mr Palaszczuk) under section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992

1 October 2001—

Electoral Commission of Queensland—Surfers Paradise By-Election 2001 details of polling report

8 October 2001—

Board of Examiners (Statutory certificates of competency for safe mine management)—Annual Report 2000-2001
Coal Mining Safety and Health Advisory Council—Annual Report 2000-2001
Mining Safety and Health Advisory Council—Annual Report 2000-2001
Administration of the Foreign Ownership of Land Register Act 1988—Annual Report 2000-2001

9 October 2001—

Supreme Court Library Committee—Annual Report 2000-2001

11 October 2001—

Training and Employment Board—Annual Report 2000-2001

12 October 2001—

Treasurer's Appropriation Statement 2000-2001
Apprenticeship and Traineeship Ombudsman—Annual Report 2000-2001

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments, received during the recess, were tabled by The Clerk—

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

Police Powers and Responsibilities Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2001, No. 162

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation (Forest Reserves) Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 163

Funeral Benefit Business Act 1982—

Funeral Benefit Business Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 164

Retirement Villages Act 1999—

Retirement Villages Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 165

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

Workplace Health and Safety Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 166

Plant Protection Act 1989—

Plant Protection (Tropical Fire Ant) Notice 2001, No. 167

Casino Control Act 1982—

Casino Control Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 168

Government Owned Corporations Act 1993—

Government Owned Corporations (Queensland Investment Corporation) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 169

Fisheries Act 1994—

Fisheries Legislation Amendment and Repeal Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 170

Forestry and Land Title Amendment Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing remaining provisions, No. 171

Stock Act 1915—

Stock (Cattle Tick) Amendment Notice (No. 1) 2001, No. 172

Training and Employment Act 2000—

Training and Employment Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 173 and Explanatory Statement and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 173

Drugs Misuse Act 1986—

Drugs Misuse Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 174

Forestry Act 1959—

Forestry (State Forests) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 175

Food Production (Safety) Act 2000—

Food Production (Safety) Postponement Regulation 2001, No. 176

Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966, Apiaries Act 1982, Brands Act 1915, Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988, Stock Act 1915, Timber Utilisation and Marketing Act 1987, Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936—

Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 177

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995—

Workplace Health and Safety (Industry Codes of Practice) Amendment Notice (No. 3) 2001, No. 178

Indy Car Grand Prix Act 1990—

Indy Car Grand Prix Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 179

State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971—

State Development and Public Works Organisation Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2001, No. 180

Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000—

Police Powers and Responsibilities Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2001, No. 181

Tow Truck Act 1973—

Tow Truck Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 182

Transport (Busway and Light Rail) Amendment Act 2000—

Transport (Busway and Light Rail—Postponement) Regulation 2001, No. 183

Nature Conservation Act 1992—

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Amendment Regulation (No. 4) 2001, No. 184

Plant Protection Act 1989—

Plant Protection (Prescription of Pests) Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2001, No. 185

Plant Protection Act 1989—

Plant Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2001, No. 186

Weapons Act 1990—

Weapons Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 187 and Explanatory Notes and Regulatory Impact Statement for No. 187

Corrective Services Act 2000—

Corrective Services Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 188

Property Agents and Motor Dealers Amendment Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 189

Aboriginal Land Act 1991, Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991—

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2001, No. 190

Dangerous Goods Safety Management Act 2001—

Proclamation commencing certain provisions, No. 191

MINISTERIAL RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

The following response to petitions, received during the recess, was tabled by The Clerk—

Response from the Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy (Mrs Edmond) to a petition presented by Mrs E Cunningham from 7,914 petitioners, regarding retractable syringes and a petition presented by Mr Rowell from 636 petitioners, regarding public dental services in Ingham—

14 Sep 2001

Mr R Doyle
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Doyle

Thank you for your letter dated 10 August 2001 enclosing two petitions received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 9 August 2001, regarding retractable syringes and public dental services in Ingham.

In relation to the petition calling for the fast-track introduction of retractable syringes into the Queensland Needle and Syringe Program, I can advise that my concern about the risk of needlestick injury led to the issue being placed on the national agenda of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy in July 2000. At this meeting Ministers agreed to the development of a national standard for syringes with retractable needles for use by injecting drug users.

The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy met again in July 2001 and considered the recommended national standard for Syringes with Retractable Needles, which are attached, along with recommendations as to how they should be assessed. Ministers agreed that further work should be undertaken to develop a scientifically rigorous evaluation trial of retractable needles and syringes which meet the agreed standard. I have indicated that Queensland would be prepared to take part in such a trial. Ministers requested a report on implementing the recommendations by January 2002.

Unfortunately, it has yet to be demonstrated that the currently available retractable needles meet all criteria contained within the national standard. Furthermore, these retractable needles are designed for use in health care settings and require user compliance, where the user must manually undertake an action that causes the needle to retract.

The Queensland Government acknowledges that members of the public are deeply concerned about incidences of unsafely discarded needles and syringes and anything within reason to increase public confidence in the Needle and Syringe Program will be done. However, debate regarding this issue should be based on factual evidence.

Contrary to some claims made in the media, a recent review of the scientific literature on needle and syringe programs published by the Australian National Council on Aids, Hepatitis C and Related Diseases (ANCAHRD) found that there have been no published or documented cases of a member of the general public becoming infected with HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C as a result of a needlestick injury from discarded injection equipment (ANCAHRD 2000).

The National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research at the University of New South Wales is currently working with the States and Territories to improve documentation of incident case reporting for HCV infection, and intend to develop corresponding procedures for HBV. In Queensland, these are notifiable diseases.

ANCAHRD has cited a study of 408 people in Rome who suffered needlestick injuries from discarded syringes. In 40% of cases the needle had passed through a shoe or clothing. None developed HIV following the needle stick injury. In a study in Madrid between May 1988 and April 1995, 249 children who suffered a needlestick injury from discarded needles and syringes were tested for HIV. None tested positive for HIV.

The same findings have been demonstrated in research conducted at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne where all children presenting at outpatients with a community needlestick injury (NSI) between January 1997 to August 1999 were screened for sero-conversion to blood-borne diseases. 50 NSIs were identified, 34 of whom returned for follow up at 3 months or after. None were positive for HIV, HBV or HCV. (Russell FM, Nash MC; oral presentation RACP Conference Adelaide 2000).

Queensland Health has several strategies in place to reduce the degree of unsafely disposed of syringes in our communities. As well as education for clients about safe disposal, all injecting equipment supplied by Queensland Health is accompanied by disposal containers. Safe disposal of equipment is emphasised to both health workers and drug users. Staff encourage clients to return used injecting equipment if practical, or to dispose of it safely.

In addition, a training program specifically designed for health workers distributing sterile injecting and disposal equipment has been developed and is being implemented. This program emphasises to health workers the significance of informing clients of the importance of safe disposal of used injecting equipment, and of providing information relating to public disposal facilities.

In relation to the petition regarding public dental services in Ingham, I am advised that the dentist at the Ingham Dental Clinic resigned on 4 June 2001. However, an active recruitment campaign has now secured the services of a permanent, full time dentist to the Ingham Dental Clinic who will commence duty later this year.

I am further advised that since the resignation of the dentist at Ingham, a dentist from the Townsville Dental Clinic has provided general and emergency care for Ingham Dental Clinic patients, five days per fortnight. This arrangement will continue until the permanent dentist commences work.

Thank you for bringing these matters to my attention and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Wendy Edmond

Wendy Edmond

Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Premier on Women's Policy

Criteria for the Development of Retractable Needles and Syringes

The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy endorsed the following criteria for the development of retractable needles and syringes for use in needle and syringe programs by people who inject drugs:

1. After use needle no longer exposed
2. Tamper resistant
3. Be non-reuseable
4. Syringe must allow aspiration
5. Syringe is able to draw and expel liquid up to and including nominal capacity
6. Be simple to operate and not require additional user education or co-operation to operate mechanism
7. Manufactured at comparable cost to needles and syringes currently distributed through Needle and Syringe Programs
8. Complies with Australian Standard AS 1094-1993 or equivalent
9. Be similar to current designs of the most commonly distributed needle and syringe—1ml

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Freedom of Information

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): Today I want to speak about the way in which Queensland is becoming a secret, arrogant state. The government of this state is obsessed with controlling information and keeping information to itself. It has lost all the principles of open and accountable government that should apply to a modern government in this day and age.

The Fitzgerald inquiry and the subsequent report dealt at some length with the issue of government secrecy. Section 3.2.2 on page 126 of the Fitzgerald report states—

A government can deliberately obscure the processes of public administration and hide or disguise its motives. If not discovered there are no constraints on the exercise of political power.

The rejection of constraints is likely to add to the power of the Government and its leaders, and perhaps lead to an increased tendency to misuse power.

...

The ultimate check on public maladministration is public opinion, which can only be truly effective if there are structures and systems designed to ensure that it is properly informed. A Government can use its control of Parliament and public administration to manipulate, exploit and misinform the community, or to hide matters from it. Structures and systems designed for the purpose of keeping the public informed must therefore be allowed to operate as intended.

Secrecy and propaganda are impediments to accountability, which is a prerequisite for the proper functioning of the political process. Worse, they are the hallmarks of a diversion of power from the Parliament.

We are seeing from the Beattie Labor government secrecy and a control of information. As the Fitzgerald report states, they are the hallmarks of a diversion of power from the parliament. We are seeing example after example of this government trying to cover up every piece of information it possibly can so that it can continue in its arrogant way with its huge majority in this place of 66. It wants to do what it likes without what it regards as the nuisance of the opposition, the media or non-government parties doing what they are entitled to do—probe, check and find out what is happening so that the government is held accountable to the taxpayers of this state.

Queensland has been down this path. We have dealt with the costly Fitzgerald inquiry and report, which resulted in the National Party government implementing accountability measures lock, stock and barrel. Through the 1990s, Queensland governments moved on to introduce freedom of information legislation and implement other systems so that we can now say to the public of Queensland—or we should be able to—that we have an accountable, open and honest government. If people want to check things, if the opposition and non-government parties want to undertake their responsibilities and check things, or if the media or other independent research organisations want to find out the reasons for decisions, there are reasonable ways in which that can be done so that the taxpayers of this state can be provided with those answers.

However, again and again we see examples of the government doing its best to hide every piece of information it possibly can despite the FOI legislation. Also today we saw clear evidence that the government is very comfortable with being a control freak. The supposedly independent Stamp Duty Commissioner has been gagged by the Treasurer's henchmen. He has not been able to speak out about the whys and wherefores of the decisions that were made in relation to Cheryl Kernot.

In the meantime, the rest of us face being slugged with an accountability tax, which will be introduced into this parliament in proposed legislation. That entails people being charged \$20 per hour for work undertaken in relation to FOI applications on top of the original FOI application fee of \$31. If the government is going to take this proposal to the nth degree, that could mean also that the government might find allegations of official misconduct made to the CJC a nuisance that costs money, for which someone has to pay. Are we going to have an accountability tax on complaints that are made to the CJC? Are we going to have an accountability tax put on those people who make inquiries of the Ombudsman—inquiries that take considerable time and effort of the staff and cost money?

When FOI legislation was introduced, it was always going to be the government's responsibility to provide information. That legislation is one of the cornerstones of open, honest and accountable government—a modern style of government that deals with a public that wants to be informed. In that way, the government provides that information and then has the courage to argue its case as to why a decision was made, based on facts made available to people who have sought the information.

Mr Terry Sullivan interjected.

Mr HORAN: I hear the member for Chermside yelling out. He is quite happy to support this accountability tax that will be imposed on the opposition and non-government parties. This tax will mean that the government does not want organisations, on behalf of the people of Queensland, to try to find out why decisions were made and whether they were made correctly, honestly, and without any coercion. The member would like to gag those organisations. He would like to put handcuffs on opposition members. He knows that the opposition has to work within a tight budget and, owing to this accountability tax, may not be able to afford to make genuine inquiries on behalf of people.

The government is not trying to gag only the opposition; it is trying to gag democracy. The state of Queensland is entering a new dark age. We thought that we had moved into enlightened times, with FOI being the cornerstone of government and information being freely available to all. However, FOI is now going to be a privilege for the wealthy who can afford it. When organisations or individuals make applications for information that is not related to them personally they will have to pay this tax. So FOI will be a privilege. We have entered a new era: an accountability tax on information that is only within the reach of multimillionaires.

As I said, this tax will restrict the level of investigation and research that the opposition can undertake on behalf of the people, because we have a limited budget. It also sets a dangerous precedent. If the government places this tax on FOI, as it becomes more cash strapped—and we know it lost \$820 million from its operating budget last year—it will look at the CJC and say, 'Maybe we should be charging a complaints fee. Maybe we should charge \$20 an hour for the research undertaken.'

Mr Terry Sullivan: Come on!

Mr HORAN: It is exactly the same principle. This is about the members opposite being frightened. They are control freaks. That is the way in which the ALP has always operated. It wants to control information. It is not game to debate decisions openly.

Also today legislation will be introduced into this parliament relating to the Ombudsman. I will be interested to see whether that legislation will enable the government to gain control over the Ombudsman, who should be absolutely independent.

This government has a control-freak mentality. Just the other day the government announced that it was going to take the independent research facility from the Criminal Justice Commission and place it into the Premier's Department so that the government will have control of it. Can members imagine the government announcing that it has research on the dreadful way in which the government is handling drugs misuse, housebreakings or anything like that? Of course they cannot! It will be a cover-up.

Some of the FOI applications that we have made relate to the Families Department, the State Development Department, the Health Department, the footbridge fiasco, the Lang Park stadium and the Virgin deal. All of those issues, which are important to the public, have been wheeled into the cabinet so that the government does not have to give us important information. The government will now add to its arsenal another weapon: money. It will wheel what it can into cabinet and what it cannot wheel into cabinet it will put a charge on. Therefore, if we make an application it might cost us \$1,000 or \$500 or \$1,500—

Time expired.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Liddy Clark): Order! I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the Kawana RAAF Association, from the seat of Kawana.

Year of the Outback

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): I would like to share with the House today some of the energy and excitement occurring in my electorate and, at the same time, applaud the wonderful efforts of the people of the Aramac shire, their far-sighted council led by energetic Mayor Gary Peoples, able CEO Tony Jarvis and the team at the shire office.

Throughout the world the Australian outback is an icon. It stands proudly in the front line of the tourism industry and communities are paving the way for the outback to attract tourist interest for the 2002 Year of the Outback celebrations. Those celebrations will see the coming together of remote communities to provide a smorgasbord of the highest quality performers, performances, displays, shows and celebrations that I believe this country will have ever seen. The word

'outback' itself invokes a range of images of dusty sunsets across the expanse of a sweeping horizon and Australian pioneers carving out livelihoods in some of the most remote locations of the earth under the most extreme conditions imaginable.

We now have an opportunity to look at our heritage and recognise and celebrate with our rural and remote communities. We have a chance to shift our focus away from the coast and cities and be involved in the many activities and celebrations being offered over the seasons of 2002.

I would like to draw the attention of the members of this House to the efforts of one of my remote communities in Central Queensland. The Aramac shire is a community of only 980 residents spread across 23,000 square kilometres. Despite geographical remoteness and small numbers, they are committed to providing a real outback experience for locals and tourists alike to share. We have here a real gem of the outback. To mention just a few of its features, there are visible gardens in a tidy town, a new motel, a new QGAP facility—thank you, Mr Palaszczuk—a trendy relocated library and no vacant houses. Muttaborra boasts the best steak cook in the west in Fiona Turnbull at the Exchange Hotel, a newly renovated tourist attraction in Cassimatis's store and a wonderful volunteer tourist guide in Nev Bullen, as well as many other features.

The 2002 Year of the Outback celebrations will provide the scaffolding for those two communities to celebrate their pioneering history through the recognition of someone I would like to mention to members of the House. His name is Henry 'Harry' Redford. Born in 1841 of Irish convict stock, Redford grew up in the Hawkesbury River district and later drifted to the western regions of New South Wales and Queensland in search of a future. In 1871 he led the most daring cattle duffing case ever recorded in our history. He and his companions misappropriated 1,500 head of cattle from Bowen Downs and drove them through virtually unexplored country to sell in Adelaide. Harry has been recognised as a folk hero and earned the name of Captain Starlight.

The Aramac shire will release a recently obtained journal of the true story of Redford's adventure and provide an opportunity for travellers to join the cattle drive re-enactment from Aramac to Roma, the place of Redford's trial. The event will impact on seven central and western shires and tourists will be treated to three months of progressive outback experiences from bronco branding to camel racing, camp oven cooking and the Milky Way. This experience will commence at the Festival of Aramac from 17 to 19 May 2002.

Without having commenced any publicity, this tiny rural town is preparing for more than 300 motorhome and caravan bookings that have already been made for that weekend for three days of festivities, providing a full range of outback entertainment, country music singers, skydiving and an agricultural show. These will lead into the launch of the cattle drive heading out of Aramac on Sunday, 19 May for Muttaborra, the first town of the historical re-enactment to benefit from its coming to town.

Outback spirit, hospitality and national pride will continue to be worn on the sleeve of my outback communities. I extend an open invitation to the Premier, the Deputy Premier, ministers and members of this House to experience the outback and demonstrate their support by attending this event. Indeed, a good starting point might be to have a few coldies near the statue of the white bull that led to Captain Starlight's downfall. It awaits you in the main street of Aramac, just outside the Aramac Hotel!

Mr M. Johnson

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (11.45 a.m.): In these troubled times, it is incumbent upon all those who hold or seek to hold public office and all who are charged with upholding the law by their professional pursuit to set the right example for the community to follow. It is dreadfully easy to whip up hysteria. It is even worse to invoke community fears of terrorism which have no basis in fact.

Nothing does more to undermine the work of the police than the failure to report serious crime. How can the police detect and stamp out crime if it is not reported? I draw to the House's attention an appalling failure on the part of one who seeks public office and one who is 'an officer of the court', that is, a barrister, to set the kind of example that the community expects and deserves.

A few weeks ago, the federal Liberal Party candidate for Ryan, the serial branch stacker Mr Michael Johnson, received favourable media coverage when he announced that he was

organising a solidarity dinner in Ryan to support the families of victims of the US terrorist attacks and to raise funds for the Royal Brisbane Hospital burns unit. Even Mr Johnson's critics—and there are many in the western suburbs of the Liberal Party and in the media—thought that this was a noble gesture given the parlous state of Liberal Party finances.

However, after grabbing the favourable headline and getting the kudos, Mr Johnson suddenly announced in the *South West News* of 2 October that the dinner had been cancelled. The newspaper article states, 'Organiser Michael Johnson said the cancellation was forced after a fellow organiser received anonymous threats of protests and damage to property.' In these highly charged times, those are very serious allegations, especially when the community at large is on edge about international events. Even Mr Johnson said, 'It's really disturbing.'

So what was Mr Johnson's response? Rather than assist authorities to help piece together a response to this cowardly disruption to a charity fund-raising dinner, Mr Johnson said that the incidents had not been reported to the police. Because the newspaper covers much of the Ryan electorate and the publicity for the function came from within Ryan, Mr Johnson has allowed the people of Ryan to be smeared by the terrorist tag for threatening to disrupt a function. Surely in this environment serious allegations like those should be reported to the police. The Prime Minister should call on his candidate to come forward and give any information he has to the Federal Police.

Mr Johnson has form in being a headline seeker when it comes to the reporting of crime. Earlier this year Mr Johnson alleged that he was the victim of a break-in at his Milton office. The alleged break-in occurred just prior to the first Ryan preselection from which Mr Johnson was excluded because he held dual citizenship. On that occasion, he said that his computer, briefcase and computer disks were stolen and it became a 'massive distraction from my preselection efforts'.

Interestingly, Mr Johnson did not reveal the break-in when it occurred. He waited for about a month. He revealed the crime during the Ryan by-election at a time that would do maximum damage to the Liberal Party's by-election chances in Ryan, because it was an attempted smear on the Liberal Party candidate in Ryan. I am reliably informed that Mr Johnson did not even report the break-in to the Liberal Party, which is surprising because the alleged theft occurred days prior to the preselection and involved the theft of 'political material'. Nor did the theft interrupt Mr Johnson's plan some months later of rorting the preselection he ultimately won in Ryan when I understand scores of voters were admitted to the Centenary branch of the party under what are still the most corrupt preselection rules in the nation.

The break-in may not be suspicious, but the timing of its release to the media by Johnson most certainly is. The question persists: why did Mr Johnson wait over a month to report an incident of apparent or alleged political sabotage to the police, and why did he do so just days before the Ryan by-election? Why, oh, why has he never reported to the police the threats of terrorist interruption to a function?

Mr Howard likes to talk about the ticker of his opponents. The matters raised in the House today go to the question of character and whether a person has enough character to be suitable to represent the people of Ryan in the national parliament.

Time expired.

Maidenwell Rural Fire Brigade

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.50 a.m.): I wish to draw to the attention of the parliament the plight of one group of volunteers throughout Queensland, and that is the rural bush fire brigades. The rural bush fire brigades are operating under adverse conditions at present. If we go west of the range and even to the bottom of the range, which is not far from Brisbane, we can see the smoke haze that is continually lingering over the communities in those areas.

For example, the small town of Maidenwell consists of a pub and one very small shop with a fuel bowser. The rural bush fire brigade there is made up of volunteers, as they all are. Since 1 October, they have been continually fighting fires. This very small community has very limited access to funds. The levy collected by the shire council in that area raises approximately \$2,600 to \$2,800. That is not too bad—it is more than some rural bush fire brigades have—but it is a lot less than others have.

The brigade has to cover approximately 24,000 hectares of very rugged mountainous terrain. It is heavily treed and extremely dry. Its combustibility is such that sometimes it might be better

just to let it go. In this area there are a lot of people on five-acre or larger blocks. Whether one has 1,000 acres or five acres, either way the levy is \$15. That is all most of these people can afford. It is a very low socioeconomic area, with many people on pensions or the dole.

There is approximately 50 kilometres of sealed road in the whole area. The rest consists of dirt tracks and roads. Any repairs to the vehicle are paid for by the brigade and come out of its \$2,800. Over the past 12 days it has attended seven fires. Approximately 7,000 hectares have been destroyed in that time. The fuel cost in that time has been \$500-plus, which is a huge chunk of that \$2,800. The fire season has not even started, so what impact will the remaining amount have over the rest of the year? Virtually none! It will disappear in a flash.

The part that bites most is the fuel cost. These people are forced to pay 95c a litre at the one bowser in their tiny little town with one shop and one pub. Many rural fire brigades have a BP card which they can call on, but not this small group. The reason the brigade uses the little shop on the corner with its one bowser is that the couple who own it are prepared to open at any time of the day or night and they make sandwiches to feed the men and women. Both men and women fight the fires and man the stations.

Out of that \$2,800—and, as I said, it is more than some have but less than others have—they pay for repairs, tyres, phone calls, electricity and so on. It is getting to the stage at which it is no longer viable for them to have raffles to even raise a bit of extra cash. They fear that a lot of people who call on the firefighting service will be knocked back because they will not have the fuel to even get to the fire.

Some of these men and women have been working 12-hour shifts. Concern has been raised about the need for a counsellor, as it is feared that some are cracking under the pressure. Why are they cracking? That is happening because many people whose properties are threatened by fire are abusing volunteers and giving directions as to how to fight the fires. Some have even been confronted with machetes. This is not a very pleasant situation. I would ask that people on properties in rural areas get to know the bush fire brigade members and get them onto their property so that they can assess the fire dangers and the various ways in which they can fight fires.

Although trained to assess situations, these men are not going to risk their volunteers if they are not familiar with the terrain. As I said, in this area it is particularly steep and often there are tanks and buildings that the firefighters know nothing about. The abuse they cop when these go up in smoke is appalling. It is suspected that most fires have been started through arson. We believe that charges are pending.

Time expired.

Tourism Industry, Cairns

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): The terrorist attacks in the US and the subsequent impact on international air travel is having serious economic consequences world wide. This incident alone would have adversely affected the Australian tourism industry. In combination with the collapse of Ansett, the impact on the industry in Cairns and Far North Queensland is of grave concern and is the most serious in the state.

Our regional situation is unique, considering regional and product diversity, our dependence on airline seat availability and airfare levels, distance from major domestic markets and seasonality of domestic and various international markets.

The federal Tourism Industry Working Group revealed that the tourism industry will lose more than a billion dollars by the end of the year and could take up to two years to recover. And who co-chaired this group? None other than federal Tourism Minister Jackie Kelly, who described the Ansett collapse as 'just a blip'. The minister deserved every bit of criticism she received for that insulting and stupid remark.

Ms Keech: Hear, hear!

Dr LESLEY CLARK: I thank the member. I know that other members share my concerns about the tourism industry. Certainly, she was forced to resign; I think she should have been sacked.

I joined tourism industry operators at the meeting with the working group when it came to Cairns, where the widespread extent of the impact on the tourist industry was made clear, with some individual businesses suffering huge losses and some suffering an 80 per cent loss in

bookings. The flow-on effect on workers and other industries is biting, creating hardship for many in the Cairns area.

The Tourism Industry Working Group recommendations included concessional loans, deferral of company tax, tax deductions for conferences and restaurant meals, \$150 million for tourism promotion and, of course, a return to full domestic air capacity. But to date the federal government's response has been totally inadequate—just a mere \$20 million for the whole of Australia, with \$15 million for business and \$5 million for promotion for next year.

The Queensland government has a much better understanding of the importance of the tourism industry. We know that it needs help now. We have already launched a \$4.1 million domestic promotion and marketing campaign. Yesterday, Premier Peter Beattie announced cabinet approval for a six-point plan to assist Queensland tourism and related industries. The plan will be implemented immediately and will remain in place until the sustained recovery of the Queensland tourism industry is evident.

We are determined that the tourism industry, which is the lifeblood of Cairns and which employs some 150,000 workers state wide, will bounce back as quickly as possible. Under the plan—

- a Tourism and Related Industries Immediate Response Group has been established to monitor industry conditions and develop response options;

- \$10 million will be allocated to provide low-interest loans for small tourism and related businesses experiencing extreme difficulties due to the impact of the Ansett collapse and terrorist activities;

- the government will approach financial institutions to encourage them to consider offering temporary relief for business borrowers directly affected by recent events;

- all government agencies will investigate the capacity of existing programs to be directed towards assisting those affected;

- the Department of Employment and Training will examine the capacity of vocational education and training to address employment and training issues arising from the current economic conditions;

- the Premier will urge the Commonwealth government to adopt a more interventionist approach in the current economic environment, including further urgent relief for tourist operators, counter-cyclical expenditure and the provision of active labour market programs.

In today's *Cairns Post* I am pleased to see that TTNQ, our regional tourism body, has welcomed this plan. I note that even on the federal scene the tourism task force chief executive, Christopher Brown, praised the plan, saying that Queensland has been the first state to come to the rescue of the embattled tourism industry.

Many regard Virgin as the saviour for Cairns, and no doubt it will improve our capacity. I look forward to the day when Virgin does fly into Cairns. However, Virgin should never be considered as an alternative to Ansett mark II. Getting Ansett flying again and its 17,000 workers employed must be the primary goal. I take this opportunity to place on record my personal support for Ansett staff in Cairns and to commend the tireless work of Peter Ryan of the Transport Workers Union and David Young and Margaret Dale of the Australian Services Union. The union movement has been magnificent in its defence of the Ansett workers, who now realise as never before the critical importance that unions play in protecting working people. They should also remember that John Howard has the union movement firmly in his sights if the coalition is returned to power.

The court decision to make \$150 million from Air New Zealand available to the Ansett administrator was an important milestone on the road to creating Ansett mark II. However, the administrator should not have been forced to contribute \$35 million of that to the federal government for worker entitlements.

Desley Boyle and I have attended rallies with Ansett workers, and the message is clear: the federal government must provide more support to the Ansett administrator to get the airline flying again, particularly into regional areas such as Cairns which are so dependent on airlines. Here again the state is playing an important part, and the Premier, Peter Beattie, will continue to keep the pressure on the federal government and work with the administrator to get the best outcome possible for Ansett and Flight West workers. Let us all hope that the negotiations this week prove successful.

Lang Park

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.00 p.m.): Today I wish to speak about the Lang Park redevelopment. There are four main areas of transport infrastructure which will contribute significantly to the massive cost blow-out of Mr Beattie's unequivocal commitment to the budget limit of \$280 million for the Lang Park redevelopment: Milton Road access, which is estimated at \$50 million; tunnels from Roma Street Transit Centre, the cost of which are incalculable as they are not possible; Roma Street pedestrian bridge, \$30 million; and a rail corridor, costing \$4 million for acquisition of vacant land from the Victoria Barracks site.

The present information is that none of the options associated with these transport infrastructure proposals to support the new stadium will work. From a project management perspective, the tactic that the Beattie government is engaging in is to befuddle the budget management process and hide the inevitable overrun of the \$280 million figure known as job splitting.

As the aforementioned transport infrastructure proposals are capitalised expenses that should be contributed to the cost of the original project, that is the Lang Park redevelopment, the Beattie government will be hiding this additional costing expenditure, most likely in the budgets of other departments such as Treasury, as separate funding proposals. Information from the public sector is that the \$280 million figure claimed by Mr Beattie is already \$300 million.

The public sector is also sick and tired of what is going on and is leaking like a sieve. We talk about accountability from this government. However, to comply with the \$280 million budget estimate Mr Beattie will have to sacrifice elements of the project such as transport infrastructure. It is anticipated that shortly after the completion of the project Mr Beattie will announce a civil infrastructure project to boost city access from the new stadium site.

The Queensland government is currently undertaking valuations in the Petrie Terrace area and is undertaking negotiations with the Department of Defence in relation to Victoria Barracks. I note that the cost of land acquisitions is likely to be extremely high because of the inner-city location. It will be the highest fixed cost for this proposal. This point is demonstrated by the negotiations that the Beattie government is currently engaged in with the Department of Defence for the acquisition of vacant land on the Victoria Barracks site, the extension of the Roma Street corridor and also the potential sale of the entire Victoria Barracks.

The bottom line for the Department of Defence is that it has to achieve market value if any of these transactions are to proceed. The main obstacle to the Beattie Labor government's acquisition of land from the Victoria Barracks site for either of these purposes is the fact that the Victoria Barracks is listed on the Register of National Estate under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983. To get around this problem the government would have to make a submission to the Australian Heritage Commission stating that the intended use for the corridor would not in any way endanger the listing—that is, jeopardise, degrade it, et cetera.

The Beattie government is likely to be successful in such a submission because the land sought to be acquired for the rail corridor is vacant. However, the Department of Defence will not sell the land to the Beattie government for rail corridor purposes. Defence will sell it only for purposes such as medium density townhouses. The fact here is that the Department of Defence will not do any sweetheart deals with the Beattie government. All negotiations are being conducted on a normal commercial basis, recognising the very high market value of land in the inner-city locality.

I have here a letter from the Treasurer, Mr Terry Mackenroth, dated 8 October, to Mary Lou Spratt. In it he refuses Spratt's application to be a member of the community liaison group—CLG—for the spurious stated reasons. It states—

... I have decided that membership of the CLG will be comprised of organisations or groups and not individual nominees.

It is considered the representative organisations will provide greater opportunity for the presentation of collective views at the meetings, allowing for effective discussion and decision-making. Further, the existing structures of the groups will allow for wider dissemination of information from the CLG and the efficient determination of views of membership on issues before the Group.

The process for the dissemination and gathering of information would prove more difficult for individual members of the CLG.

I table that letter, which lists a number of groups that have been accepted in the CLG. Notable absences are the Milton Residents Group and the Petrie Terrace Residents Association, particularly Ms Spratt and Anne Boccabella. The Petrie Terrace Residents Association was not even invited to apply. Individuals from these groups made objections to the original draft impact study of the project. The Treasurer denied the second round of submissions that could be lodged through his declaration that the project was an essential piece of state infrastructure under the IPA, which allowed him to abbreviate due process and prevent any further community objections being received. The final nail in the coffin was the call-in under the IPA by Mr Barton. It ensured that the right to community participation would be severely curtailed.

Time expired.

Hervey Bay; Mr W. Truss

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): I rise today to inform the House of the anger of the Hervey Bay community at the failure of the federal National Party member for Wide Bay, Warren Truss, to have \$4 million in government grants for Wide Bay-Burnett industries delivered prior to the impending federal election. I refer honourable members to the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* dated 31 March 2001, which featured the banner headline 'Jobs! Action! Now!' and a large colour photograph of the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, and a very excited Mr Truss enthusing over Mr Truss's so-called Invest Wide Bay plan.

Mr Truss was quoted as saying that his plan would be better than the 'endless studies, report writing and magic fairy ideas' which have been going on for too long. He went on to be quoted as saying, 'I want to do it fast—within a month or so.' Mr Truss's so-called plan involved the sum of \$4 million to be distributed to suitable projects as seed funding to create growth in the electorate of Wide Bay. Honourable members may be wondering then what was the outcome of Mr Truss's breathless urgency now that six months have passed? Members will be as disappointed as I am and as disappointed as the people of Hervey Bay are to find out that the actual outcome is zilch, zip, zero—nothing!

In the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* published on 8 October 2001, Mr Truss announced that the allocation of government grants for Wide Bay-Burnett industries would not happen before next month's federal election. Mr Truss confirmed that 69 applications had been received, vying for a share of the \$4 million under the Invest Wide Bay plan, and he promised that the money would still be available after the 10 November election. What went wrong with our action man? What happened to the 'Jobs! Action! Now!'? How did his desperate determination to avoid endless 'studies, report writing and magic fairy ideas' wind up as six months of endless press releases and no money? I can certainly inform the House that there was no lack of publicity for Mr Truss's initiative along the way.

The good residents of Wide Bay were subjected to a string of media releases from Mr Truss's office confirming that he would be calling nominations for a committee to assess the grants, that he would be naming the committee to assess the grants soon, that a committee to assess the grants had been chosen, that the committee would be calling for the grants applications shortly, that the committee was considering the applications and so on. Around and around it went, with Mr Truss certainly getting great publicity value for the money which had not been handed over.

I have been contacted by a number of distraught applicants for the funding who in some cases have spent up to \$5,000 preparing voluminous application material on an urgent basis and who are staggered that after six months Mr Truss's action plan has been downgraded to an election promise. His one-month time frame has blown out to the next term and his credibility in being able to deliver government programs is in tatters. These people are angry that they have been used in Mr Truss's stunt and there is now considerable doubt in the community as to whether Mr Truss ever intended to have any grants delivered before the election.

Mr Truss has toured around the district with his pork barrel, beating the sides of it relentlessly for six months. But, come the election, all we get is the barrel but no pork. Mr Truss is now blaming the caretaker convention for his failure to deliver the much wanted dollars for Wide Bay. Blaming the caretaker convention is a furphy to cover Mr Truss's own incompetence in this matter.

I am sure that all members of this place will be amazed to hear that in the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* of 7 October 2001 Mr Truss, through a spokesman, started to blame the committee which he himself had selected for the failure to deliver the money. The spokesman is quoted as saying that the committee was caught off guard when the election was called early after CHOGM was cancelled. What early election? The election is to be held three years and one month after

the previous federal election. The election is actually late. How do the volunteer members of Mr Truss's committee feel about being made scapegoats for Mr Truss's own incompetence?

Mr Truss's other excuse as quoted in the *Chronicle* was that advertising for candidates for the Invest Wide Bay Committee took time. Apparently, Mr Truss cannot even put a committee together without it being a bit too hard. Remember, this is the bloke who wanted 'Jobs! Action! Now!'. Mr Truss is correct in saying that the Wide Bay has significant economic problems which require federal intervention. It is just that in this exercise he has demonstrated a capacity for self-promotion and bureaucracy, the inverse of his capacity for community organisation and program delivery. Mr Truss is the \$4 million man and his Invest Wide Bay plan hangs around his neck like a millstone going into this election. The banner headline 'Jobs! Action! Now!' should more accurately have read 'No jobs! No action! Later!' Mr Truss is widely viewed as a disappointment as Agriculture Minister. Invest Wide Bay goes to prove that he struggles even as a local member. This was his idea. If he had put half the time into making it happen as he did into promoting it, a number of businesses in the Wide Bay would be benefiting right now.

Taxation Reform

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (12.10 p.m.): I rise to speak about Labor's duplicity and cynical opportunism when it comes to the issue of taxation reform in this country. Members might recall that it was in 1985 when Paul Keating first proposed reforming this country's taxation system. He knew that Australia needed this reform because he was quite clearly aware that the existing wholesale sales tax system was simply inappropriate to a modern economy and inappropriate to an economy which depended on a significant amount of exports for its income.

So it was in 1985 that Paul Keating had a meeting in Canberra and proposed option C, which of course was replacing wholesale sales tax with a broadly based consumption tax. That was Keating's proposal. What happened? On the way to the forum he got rolled. He got rolled by the former head of the ACTU and the Prime Minister of the day, Bob Hawke. He was rolled by the same people who are dictating to Kim Beazley today. The ACTU rolled Keating on taxation reform. Since that time, the Labor Party has cynically opposed any significant taxation reform in this country. It was only a few years later—in fact in the early 1990s—that Paul Keating himself opposed John Hewson in an election campaign on precisely the same issue that he had campaigned so heavily for in 1985.

Kim Beazley has taken a leaf out of Keating's book. He opposed any taxation reform at the 1998 election because he thought that by opposing it he could opportunistically win an election he had no other chance of winning. But John Howard took it up to Kim Beazley during that election campaign and won the election. Of course, having more members in the House of Representatives meant he had the numbers to form government. Again, the Labor Party in the Senate cynically opposed any resemblance of taxation reform, despite the fact that since the 1980s it has known that some kind of taxation reform was critical to this country's future.

The cynicism will continue, of course. If for some unknown reason Beazley does become Prime Minister and Labor forms government, is the Labor Party going to repeal the GST? Is the Labor Party going to reinstate the wholesale sales tax? Is the Labor Party going to reinstate higher income tax rates? No, it is not going to do any of that. It is not going to repeal the GST. It is not going to put the wholesale sales tax back in place. It will not raise income tax rates to the level they were previously, because it knows that that position is totally detrimental to Australia's future. Instead, it proposes some kind of roll back. It is not a roll back; it is a rollover. It is a rollover to certain interest groups. Those are things that Beazley thinks he might be able to get away with. Kim Beazley argues that he will reduce the complexity of the GST. The only thing he is doing is narrowing the base, and narrowing the base means that to generate the same amount of revenue income tax rates will have to be increased at some stage. In fact, all this will do is increase the complexity of the system, because the complexity of the system increases when the number of exemptions increases.

This cynicism is not just obvious in the federal Labor Party. Unfortunately, it is also obvious in this state. The Premier of this state railed against the GST, but when it came to signing the documents he was first in line. John Howard has already said publicly that he could almost see Peter Beattie pushing aside the other premiers from around the country to try to sign the agreement between the states and the federal government first. Not only that, while the Premier claims that the GST is a job destroyer, Treasury has signed off on a document which shows that

under the GST expected growth in state product will be two per cent greater. It signed the document even though publicly it criticised the process.

When the GST was introduced, what did the state government do? It tried to cynically hide behind the introduction of the GST in order to raise taxes and charges in this state. It raised electricity prices and was caught out, because I was able to announce what it was going to do beforehand. It raised stamp duty. Stamp duty charges in this state are higher today because the government taxes the full amount, including the GST.

Time expired.

Vietnam Veterans' Wives

Ms PHILLIPS (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.15 p.m.): In recent years the federal government has been gradually improving the lot of Vietnam veterans, but the people who have been sadly missing out from receiving any assistance are the wives of these men. I am not being sexist in singling out wives. The partners of both men and women who fought in Vietnam need assistance, but the overwhelming majority are wives—the forgotten women who have continued to support and suffer 35 years after their husbands went to war in Vietnam. The conservative government of the day sent our young men off to a war that had no relevance for Australia. Some went voluntarily; many were conscripted. As a nation, we had a responsibility to care for all of them when they returned. In more recent military conflicts, returning veterans were automatically entitled to a range of assistance. In respect of Vietnam, it took many years for the government to accept any responsibility for those who fought, but hardly any help is even now available for their wives.

Having met with and talked to some of these women recently, I believe that they have a very strong case to demand due consideration. As young women they said goodbye to loving, happy and friendly husbands. The men who returned after the conflict were vastly different. They had literally been through hell. As a society we are now fully aware of the dreadful legacy that active war service brings. We now prepare people before they go into conflict. We support them while they are away and facilitate contact and communication with their loved ones. There is counselling, debriefing and other assistance for them and their families when they return. All of this confirms an acknowledgment of the significant trauma that war has on combatants. As I said earlier, we have only now belatedly extended assistance to veterans of Vietnam. But what of their wives?

Many young women were left widowed because not all men survived the horrors of war. Some were killed in action; some returned and later died of wounds or disease. Some men took their own lives when they could no longer live with the memories that haunted them. In financial respects, these wives are better off, because as war widows they are entitled to a range of government assistance. However, the majority of veterans survived but many then started a long downhill run in their health. They began living through their own private hells, forever damaged from the experience that was Vietnam.

As a society, we began to acknowledge this reality, but their wives are expected to accept the dramatic changes in their husbands as normal, to go on living their lives as if nothing had happened, to rear their children in a home that was often like living with a time bomb. These women tell me about experiences that sadly reflect the reality of life. They tell about husbands who still sleep under the bed 35 years after the war and husbands who wake with nightmares and who try to attack their wives in their sleep. Others tell of husbands who are violent to them and their children and who are addicted to alcohol and other drugs.

There is a very high incidence of psychological disorders amongst Vietnam veterans because they were often subjected to abuse and even contempt when they returned from doing their duty. Today, assistance and counselling are available to these men through various programs and they are entitled to free medical help, including from psychiatrists. Not so their wives. They have to pay for counselling, for treatment and for medical assistance for themselves and their children. They are just as much veterans of the conflict as their husbands, but they are not seen as eligible for assistance. Some of the wives have not survived. Many more have bailed out of marriages because their desperate pleas for help fell on deaf ears. But many are still hanging in there and, in some cases, are suffering as badly as their veteran husbands.

Whom do they turn to for help? How have they coped all of these years, living with a husband who sometimes bears no resemblance to the young man who went off to war? How have they reared their children—the children of veterans who fought our wars? How have they

stayed sane? They are still suffering the ill effects of war. Their children suffer a suicide rate greater than that of the general public. These women feel that they are treated as second-class citizens.

The men have been granted some help, from part pensions to TPI and other benefits. Their wives, who have been with them to hell and back, can be entitled to a service pension if they do not work. Otherwise they are entitled to nothing. If they are earning, they lose all entitlement to health care, and if a wife gives up and leaves her husband she loses all benefits and allowances that she may have received on retirement.

These wives are the forgotten warriors of Vietnam—the women who have supported and cared for the veterans. Their lives have been just as affected by the war as have their husbands', and some have lived this way for 35 years. They deserve assistance, services and a better consideration from the federal government. I intend to make public their plight and to help them to fight for justice.

Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities, Drought Assistance

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (12.20 p.m.): The recent mistakes and innuendo from the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities is a desperate attempt to cover up his pitiful response to helping farmers and small businesses cope with the ongoing drought across much of western Queensland and the Darling Downs. The Palaszczyk report outlines the minister's response to the drought situation so far.

Following a November 1999 review, the Primary Industries Minister, Henry Palaszczyk, secured cabinet approval to scrap the state government's Drought Relief Assistance Scheme by 2002. In August 2000 the minister handed over \$57.7 million from Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority reserves to the Queensland Treasury, limiting the funding available to producers under drought relief schemes.

In September 2000 the minister directed the DPI to refuse drought stricken producers on the Darling Downs and in the Burnett individual drought property declarations. On 5 October 2000 the Beattie government voted down the Queensland Nationals' proposal to improve the criteria for making drought declarations. In October 2000 the local drought committee recommended that a number of shires be drought declared, but this recommendation was ignored by the minister. The minutes of meetings of the local drought committees of the Kingaroy, Nanango and Rosalie shires were later tabled in parliament. These minutes revealed that members voted eight to four in favour of the declaration but were overruled by the DPI.

On 30 October 2000, after months of delay, the Chinchilla, Wambo, Pittsworth, Clifton, Jondaryan, Rosalie, Kingaroy, Nanango, Wondai, Murgon, Eidsvold, Monto, Gayndah and Mundubbera shires were finally drought declared. In November 2000 QRAA's annual report revealed that it was forced to return another \$24 million to the Beattie government in 1998-99, which was to be used to fund projects such as the Lang Park upgrade and the Brisbane River footbridge. In December 2000 the minister announced that interest rates for QRAA's Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme would rise from six per cent to 7.68 per cent as of 1 January 2001, in line with the new lending policy.

In January 2001 the minister threatened to dismiss primary producers' representatives on Queensland's 68 volunteer local drought committees if they publicly discussed the drought situation in their areas and the deliberations of their committee. In May 2001 the exceptional circumstances application for the Darling Downs region was stalled while DPI procrastinated on providing the information needed to support the claim to the National Rural Advisory Council.

On 26 July 2001 the Bungil, Bendemere and Murilla shires and the southern portion of the Taroom shire were finally drought declared by the state government. On 7 August 2001 the Tara shire and the remaining area of the Taroom shire were finally drought declared. On 17 August 2001 the minister ignored calls from producers and rural communities and blocked attempts by the federal agriculture minister, Warren Truss, to approve exceptional circumstances schemes at the ARMCANZ meeting in Darwin.

In August 2001 the minister failed to activate the state government's small business emergency assistance scheme as required on the federal government's declaration of exceptional circumstances for the Darling Downs on 22 August 2001. In September 2001, after exposure by the Queensland Nationals, the minister was finally embarrassed into activating the small business emergency assistance scheme—more than a month later.

In October 2001 the removal of DPI officers and the failure to activate local drought committees denied drought stricken shires in the Taroom, central and north Burnett areas an application for exceptional circumstances assistance. It also failed to facilitate the extension of the existing exceptional circumstances area on the western Darling Downs and failed to keep up with the worsening drought conditions.

The minister's record is appalling by anyone's standards. This is a mean and tricky record for a minister representing a mean and tricky government. The minister should resign. The Department of Primary Industries was stripped of funding, for the department as well as for staff. There is a need to expand the exceptional circumstances area to include a significant portion of Taroom and further portions of the Murilla and Tara shires. The August rainfall percentage map shows that the Eidsvold, Mundubbera, Wondai and Monto areas are facing very serious drought conditions. Information to back up these claims was supplied to the department. Unfortunately, the department has not accepted the information and did not seek to have the total extension area approved.

The Labor government has engaged in a plan to delay the exceptional circumstances application, knowing full well that the federal government would be in caretaker mode and unable to process the application, in order to try to embarrass the federal coalition government. It is my view that this government has been stalling on drought assistance in order to try to save money. Money is no object for footbridges or stadiums, but hard-pressed primary producers and small businesses hit by drought have to fight tooth and nail to get the processes in place to obtain assistance. QRAA is now setting up staff throughout the exceptional circumstances area to process applications. That is certainly appreciated.

Time expired.

Alcoholism

Mrs CARRYN SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (12.25 p.m.): We are all aware of the consequences of the recent terrorist attacks and their devastating social impact, but today I wish to draw to the attention of the House another worldwide problem that has affected millions of people, both directly and indirectly, but, sadly, one that is much easier to turn a blind eye to.

Statistics show that alcoholism is a steadily growing problem in all communities and that the age limit of those with a drinking problem is decreasing. Statistics also indicate that 45 per cent of road deaths are caused by alcohol. We can estimate the cost to the community in terms of the health system and police, but what statistics will never show entirely is the damage done to others in the form of abuse and neglect caused by alcoholism.

No doubt some in this room here today have been affected to some degree by alcoholism, whether it be related to a friend, acquaintance or even someone closer. I know that I have had some concerns about more than one of my friends and their heavy drinking habits. But as we all know, alcohol is a legal drug. Because of its legality it appears to be acceptable. If people drink and do it well they may be socially accepted, at least initially. A drunken state can be seen as humorous. A drunk is often seen as the life of the party. To begin with it is not seen as a problem. Of course, the one with the drinking problem will be the last person to admit it.

The legal drugs of alcohol, nicotine and prescription drugs are the three biggest killers in the Western World. Over 500 people each week die from illnesses relating to them, yet this situation does not make headlines. Why? It is probably because the substances connected to the deaths are legal. Any drug overdose death caused by heroin has a much higher chance of getting in the papers than does a death caused by lung cancer, heart attack or kidney failure resulting from the abuse of legal drugs. Why? It is probably because heroin is illegal.

People who become addicted to any drug need help, and it is available. But those who want help need to seek it. One major voluntary group helping people world wide with a drinking problem is Alcoholics Anonymous. For years AA has affirmed and strengthened a tradition of being fully self-supporting and of neither seeking nor accepting contributions from non-members. AA's aim, once a person decides to give up drinking, is to provide support to help that person lead a normal and productive life free of alcohol, one day at a time. Sobriety is maintained through sharing common experiences at monthly group meetings and through the suggested 12 steps for recovery from alcoholism, which are well documented in AA literature. Its brochure states in part—

AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experiences, strengths and hopes with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Alcoholism is an illness and must be treated as such. It does not discriminate between young or old, black or white, rich or poor. I was honoured to be invited to a local AA meeting recently as guest speaker. Although I was a stranger, members freely shared with me their stories with frankness and honesty. It takes guts and courage to admit that your last drink was of kerosene.

I was told that you never forget your first AA meeting, and I can assure members here that I certainly will not forget mine—not because of any memorable speech I made but, sadly, because Brian Thomas Deecke, a well-respected member of AA, passed away moments after he and I shared some light chatter after the meeting. Brian is a devastating loss both to his family and to AA. He was the editor of the AA's prominent monthly Queensland booklet titled 'Your Pathfinder', to which he dedicated many hours. He was a sponsor to a number of the AA members and was always there when they needed support. As one sponsee put it—

Brian was a man who lived by being responsible for the sick alcoholic who came to AA for help.

People will remember him because of his friendly disposition, his dedication and commitment to his family and AA members. Brian's eulogy read in part—

If you are feeling sorry for me 2 days after my death, then you are only feeling sorry for yourself.

Brian is survived by his wife, Ronnie, her two children, Mark and Rebecca, and their daughter, Jacinta, and his two children, David and Lyn, and their six children. For those members who are interested, AA has a 24-hour hotline on 3255 9162.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The time for matters of public interest has now expired.

CRIME AND MISCONDUCT BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.31 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to provide for the establishment and operation of a Crime and Misconduct Commission, and a Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Beattie, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.32 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Twelve years ago the Criminal Justice Act 1989 was introduced to implement reforms recommended by Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald, QC. Today I introduce the Crime and Misconduct Bill:

- to recognise and build on the progress made since those tumultuous times; and
- to deliver an updated framework to take public integrity and law enforcement to a higher level in the new millennium.

In other words, this bill starts a new era for the Fitzgerald reform agenda.

In the last 12 years public administration in Queensland has undergone nothing short of a revolution, and so it should have. It has emerged stronger, more accountable and better equipped to serve Queenslanders. This bill marks the beginning of a new era for public integrity, accountability and cooperation on the one hand, and law enforcement on the other. It again unites the fight against major and organised crime—and misconduct—under one roof. This will be a more effective fighter against organised and other crime.

This merged body will benefit from combining the separate research and intelligence resources of the CJC and the Crime Commission, and sharing expensive and limited surveillance resources. This cohesive approach should also produce efficiencies by reducing unnecessary duplication, and enhance cooperation in the law enforcement community by eliminating replication. In a nutshell, both these bodies have a budget of about \$30 million. I am not talking about taking money out of them, but we are ensuring efficiencies for the future which will save

money in the long term, and that money can be spent in other areas of law enforcement like extra police and in areas like education and health.

The name 'Crime and Misconduct Commission' reflects this change and heralds the emergence of a revitalised, refocused commission better equipped to serve Queensland into the future. Past references to the CJC and the Crime Commission in legislation are deemed to be references to the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

Like the CJC, the new commission will be constituted by a full-time chairperson and four part-time commissioners. The appointments of current part-time members of the Criminal Justice Commission are being carried over in the bill to the new commission, which will benefit from their corporate knowledge and experience. The government values the investment that the commissioners have made in their work with the CJC, and is confident that they are best placed to steer the commission smoothly through the transition to a renewed method of operation.

The two major functions of the CMC, major crime and misconduct, will be performed by an Assistant Commissioner, Crime and an Assistant Commissioner, Misconduct. Both office bearers will have the right to attend commission meetings but will not have voting rights. That is because we want the community representatives to represent the community and to have that power in this very powerful body which is, in effect, a standing royal commission.

Appointment processes for the CJC chair and commissioners have largely been retained. The CMC chair must be a person qualified for appointment as a Supreme Court or High Court judge. The position can be filled after national advertising and gaining the bipartisan support of the parliamentary committee.

The four part-time CMC commissioners must have a demonstrated interest in civil liberties, or qualifications or expertise in public sector management and review, criminology, sociology, research related to crime or crime prevention, or community service. Part-time commissioners are appointed after a statewide advertising campaign, consultation with the chair, and gaining the bipartisan support of the parliamentary committee.

The commission is accountable for the discharge of all its functions to the parliamentary committee—which will be called the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and maintains the membership of the PCJC. This means that the commission will once again be accountable to parliament for its major crime functions, and so it should be.

The Criminal Justice Legislation Amendment Act 1997 removed the powers of the CJC chairperson to make many basic managerial decisions. This created a cumbersome, inefficient process whereby minor managerial decisions had to be decided by the commission as a whole. The bill restores to the chair, as chief executive officer of the commission, the clear powers necessary to make day-to-day management decisions. The Assistant Commissioner, Crime and the Assistant Commissioner, Misconduct will be responsible to the commission through the chairperson.

The chair of the commission will be required to conduct all public hearings of the commission. If he or she is unable to do so, an acting chair of the CMC must be appointed not only to conduct the hearings but also to act as chair of the CMC for the duration of the hearing.

Other than the officers mentioned, the internal structure of the commission is not defined by statute. This allows the commission to establish the organisation in the best way to perform its legislative functions, while allowing the commission to most effectively manage its operations.

The bill focuses the new commission on its core functions of combating major crime and continually improving conduct in public administration. The powers of the Crime Commission and the CJC have been carefully drafted to maintain the status quo for the crime and misconduct functions respectively—to ensure that there is no increase in powers. There is one exception to this rule. Based on a compelling case, the crime fighters will be able to conduct electronic data surveillance, which does not require telecommunications interception. With increasing use of the Internet and data transmission, including encryption by organised crime and paedophiles, this will enhance the capacity of the CMC to investigate these illegal activities. In other words, we are allowing the bugging of computers within the limitations and accountability mechanisms available through the Supreme Court.

In returning major crime to the commission, the intention is not for that function to be merely tacked onto the CJC's operations. The bill integrates the crime function as one of the two main core functions of the organisation. It is vital that Queensland have a potent capacity to combat major crime, organised crime and, of course, paedophilia. The commission's duty in this new body

will be to ensure that the crime function is given the priority it deserves, is fully incorporated into the CMC's operations and that it is appropriately resourced within the organisation's internal budget.

The bill makes little change to the crime-fighting model in the Crime Commission Act 1997. The crime function remains reference based. In other words, only major crime, including criminal paedophilia and organised crime, which is referred for investigation by the reference committee is investigated using the commission's powers of compulsion. The decision to refer matters for investigation is made by a committee of law enforcement experts and community representatives once they are satisfied that the investigation is unlikely to be effective using normal police powers and if they think that it is in the public interest to do so.

The management committee is renamed the reference committee to reflect the shifting of its management functions to the commission and its concentration on references. The composition of the reference committee remains the same except for the removal of representatives of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee. Given the accountability of the crime function to the parliamentary committee under the bill, representation on the reference committee was no longer necessary. The remainder of the current members of the management committee are transferred to serve on the reference committee. The services of the members of the Crime Commission Management Committee are specifically recognised and valued.

Paedophilia becomes reference based, like major and organised crime, to reflect the commission's role in concentrating its efforts on significant criminal activity to supplement the work of the police. This change was suggested by the Crime Commissioner.

One of the most significant achievements of this bill is to move the misconduct functions of the CJC to a new level. In addition to continuing to investigate relevant misconduct and official misconduct, which I will outline further, the commission will take up a proactive role in raising standards of integrity and conduct in units of public administration. This approach will be built on cooperation and aims to build the capacity of individual agencies to deal with misconduct themselves in a way that promotes public confidence in the process.

In recognition of reform within the Police Service since the Fitzgerald inquiry, the bill returns responsibility to police for investigating and dealing with police misconduct. To ensure appropriate supervision and control of the exercise of this function, however, the commission must still be notified of and maintain a monitoring role over police misconduct. In this monitoring role, the commission can:

- issue guidelines for the conduct of investigations;
- review or audit investigations; and
- assume responsibility for and complete an investigation.

The commission retains the ability to investigate of its own initiative the incidence of misconduct—police misconduct and official misconduct—generally in Queensland, or in particular cases.

The commission's responsibility for investigating and dealing with official misconduct is preserved not only within the Police Service but across all units of public administration. All complaints of official misconduct or suspected official misconduct must be notified to the commission. The commission can either investigate official misconduct itself, refer it to a unit of public administration for investigation, or jointly investigate it with the agency. The commission has stronger powers of supervision and control over official misconduct investigations where they have been referred to agencies to investigate solely or jointly. It can act, as outlined previously and, in addition, can require a unit of public administration to:

- report to it in a way and at the times the commission directs; or
- conduct further investigations.

When making decisions about how both police misconduct and official misconduct is best investigated, the commission is required to have regard to:

- the capacity of, and resources available to agencies;
- the nature and seriousness of the misconduct; and
- the public interest in the commission investigating the misconduct itself.

The misconduct functions of the commission have been structured to achieve several goals, to:

- build the capacity of units of public administration, particularly the police, to investigate and deal with misconduct in their own agencies;
- maintain commission oversight of the investigation of misconduct;
- encourage cooperation between the commission and agencies; and
- achieve timely and efficient results.

The current system compels police to funnel all complaints through the CJC first and wait for the CJC to refer matters back to them for investigation. This entails a considerable amount of double handling between the police and the CJC, and it means delays, which we are resolving. One aim of requiring police to investigate police misconduct in the first instance is to improve the efficiency and timeliness of all investigations by freeing up commission resources to focus on oversight and more significant investigations.

A strong client focus is built into the bill, obliging the Commissioner of Police and the commission to respond to complainants, to advise them of the action taken, the reason why the action is considered appropriate in the circumstances, and the results of any action to date. A key driver of this shift is the recognised need for senior management to take responsibility for day-to-day management issues so that they are resolved in an effective and timely way—and I repeat that: a timely way. This approach reflects practice over the last several years where the CJC has referred the bulk of police misconduct complaints to the police for investigation, and makes that process transparent.

The Assistant Commissioner, Crime and Assistant Commissioner, Misconduct will be recruited through a national advertising campaign and will be selected after consultation with the commission chair and the Leader of the Opposition. In addition to its crime and misconduct functions the commission continues to have responsibility for prevention of misconduct and major crime as well as research and intelligence functions which support all its other operations. The commission will maintain its responsibilities under the Witness Protection Act 2000.

The commission will be able to make policy recommendations about the Police Service to the Police Minister. If the Police Minister decides not to follow such a recommendation, the minister must table in parliament his or her reasons for not doing so.

The CJC retains a strong research function. It will continue to be responsible for research:

- to support its core functions—crime, misconduct, paedophilia and prevention;
- into the incidence and prevention of criminal activity;
- into any other matters relating to the administration of criminal justice referred by the minister; and
- into police operations, powers, law enforcement and the continuous improvement of the Police Service.

The CJC will still be requested by government to conduct significant independent research projects from time to time. For example, the CJC will still review the operation of the Prostitution Act 1999 in 2003.

One discrete aspect of the research function is being relocated—research on the criminal justice system. In the 12 years of its existence the CJC has not reported specifically on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Since completing the Fitzgerald research agenda, the CJC has produced very few reports on this area. Reports on criminal justice issues, like the prisoner numbers report, were produced at the request of government and other agencies.

The need for cohesion between criminal justice agencies has been identified nationally and internationally. Ensuring the safety of our communities and protecting law and order in Queensland is a priority for this government. Our ability to make sound decisions about law and order issues is dependent on receiving high-quality advice based on rigorous research not only from the Justice Department, police or corrections but relevant across the criminal justice system. We need research to be done on core policy issues like what rehabilitation is most effective, does diversion from the criminal justice system have long-term benefits, and how can the government most effectively redress the current imbalance where our indigenous population constitutes 3.2 per cent of the Queensland population but 23 per cent of the prison population.

These are issues which governments need to be informed on to shape the future—to ensure that we have less crime and safer communities. They are issues about the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, but they were not core business of the CJC nor should they be core business of the CMC.

The criminal justice research unit will be located within government and will inform government policy and resource decision making. The purpose of this unit is to have better informed decision makers, not to somehow cover up information on the criminal justice system, as has been suggested today, I understand, by the Leader of the Opposition and some who have no history and no understanding of research in this area.

At the moment the Justice Department, Police and Corrections all have databases that mostly serve their own purposes. This unit will draw from that vast bank of information and actively encourage information sharing between criminal justice agencies. Rather than stifling information on the criminal justice system, the unit will make it more accessible and intelligible. I make no excuse for this change. This change is in the interests of Queensland. We will not be deterred by those who do not understand what it means or who have some self-interest in being simply critical.

These are the facts. The CJC has approximately 28 staff working on research and prevention. Current estimates are that approximately four to six researchers may be relocated to government to staff the new research unit. It is hardly a reduction of any significance.

Conducting criminal justice research within government is not a new concept. Both New South Wales—the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research—and South Australia—the Office of Crime Statistics—have specialist criminal justice research units established within government. So I say: let us have some honest debate about this, not paranoia. Let us have some honest debate about what is good for Queenslanders. This is a good outcome for Queenslanders and people should not look up hollow logs to find things that are not there. Paranoia is all very well, but it does not produce a good outcome, and we will not have a bar of any of it. Criminal justice research is integral to achieving criminal justice coordination and to sound government decision making on law and order issues. This particular aspect of the CJC research function is therefore being relocated into government where these aims can be more effectively achieved.

To date, the CJC has been the only public agency that has not been subject to the requirements of the Criminal Justice Act 1989. There is a need to remedy this. Like any other unit of public administration, the commission and individual officers within the commission should be held accountable for misconduct or official misconduct. To date the CJC has reported such matters to the parliamentary committee pursuant to an agreed protocol. This arrangement is now given legislative force, requiring the commission to report to its committee all conduct of a commission officer that the chairperson suspects may involve improper conduct.

Commissioner Fitzgerald reported at length about the then police culture and recommended, amongst other things, that officers should be rotated through sensitive or high-risk areas on a three to five-year basis. The CJC was established in part to combat the unhealthy police culture that was exposed during the Fitzgerald inquiry. Since then, the CJC has endured and survived many testing times. Over the last few years, however, concerns have been expressed about the CJC itself developing a defensive culture. The commission must actively guard against this and ensure that it remains openly accountable for its actions and the actions of its officers.

To ensure that the commission benefits from a periodic infusion of fresh blood into its senior officer ranks, all senior positions are subject to tenure limits. The maximum period of office for the chair and part-time commissioners remains at five years, and for assistant commissioners and senior staff, eight years.

The minister's ability to monitor the commission's performance is enhanced in the bill. The commission is required to report to the minister on the efficiency, effectiveness, economy and timeliness of its systems, processes and operational procedures to satisfy the minister that it is operating to best practice standards. The minister will fully review the commission's performance no sooner than two years after commencement to assess, amongst other things, whether it:

- is operating to best practice standards;
- is appropriately resourcing its crime fighting functions;
- is dealing with complaints in a timely way, which is a matter of considerable interest; and
- has adapted to its oversight and capacity building role.

The Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee will largely continue the functions of the PCJC but will also oversee the outgoing Crime Commission functions.

The most significant change for the committee is the role of the parliamentary commissioner. The bill makes it clear that the parliamentary commissioner is an agent of the committee who acts on directions from the committee and has no powers to act of his or her own motion. Consistent with this relationship, reports prepared by the parliamentary commissioner at the request of the parliamentary committee are subject to parliamentary privilege.

The position of parliamentary commissioner is currently, and will continue to be, a part-time role. The primary purpose of the parliamentary commissioner is to improve the level of accountability of the commission to the parliamentary committee. The parliamentary commissioner's powers are substantially retained; however, its royal commission powers have been codified and tailored to suit the oversight role. The ability to compel answers or to require the production of evidence, despite the possibility of self-incrimination, is now limited to commission officers and people appointed in units of public administration. If it is necessary to compel other witnesses, the PCMC will be able to do so under the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995. The parliamentary commissioner will still be able to hold hearings but only when all other means of obtaining information have been exhausted, and only with the support of a non-partisan majority of the PCMC.

This bill addresses many of the issues raised by the PCJC in its report No. 55 Three Yearly Review of the Criminal Justice Commission. A formal response to each recommendation of that report will be provided shortly.

The proposed commencement date for this act is 1 January 2002. The transition period for the amalgamation of the CJC and the QCC, and for appointments to be made to the top statutory positions is, therefore, very short.

To ensure that the best person available leads this important new commission through its transition and into its reformed role, I propose an open appointment process for the chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, the Assistant Commissioner, and the Crime and the Assistant Commissioner, Misconduct. Without such a process the head of the commission would not have the legitimacy and respect necessary for the task ahead. This appointment process will be open and fair, but I will ensure that it is done decisively in accordance with a very tight timetable. This is necessary because I will have less than two months in which to advertise these positions nationally, finalise selections and get the commission up and running. In addition, the appointments of the assistant commissioners cannot proceed until the chair has been appointed, as the chair is to be consulted in their selection process.

To achieve this task I will appoint a panel that includes the chair and deputy chair of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee or the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee as part of the selection process for the chairperson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission. That means Geoff Wilson and Howard Hobbs, the relevant members, will be represented. This will ensure bipartisan support and, therefore, supplant the need to obtain bipartisan support from the committee for this initial appointment of the chair.

I am happy to advise the House that the committee will consist of Dr Glyn Davis, the head of the Premier's Department and soon to become the Vice-chancellor of Griffith University, Gary Crooke from the National Crime Authority, Cathy Sinclair, who has been involved in administration and is a consultant in the criminal justice area, and His Grace the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop John Bathurst. The Leader of the Opposition and the CMC chair will be consulted about the proposed appointments as assistant commissioners.

As I have already indicated, the membership of the Criminal Justice Commission will continue, as will that of the Crime Commission Management Committee, as the new Reference Committee. I have kept disruptions to these very important institutions to a bare minimum to facilitate a smooth changeover. All staff will be transferred with full entitlements and an option for Crime Commission employees to remain public service employees. There will be no jobs lost due to the amalgamation.

This bill has been developed in close consultation with both the Crime Commissioner and the chairperson of the CJC. We have consulted extensively and widely with both bodies as well as the Police Commissioner. I am indebted to both the Crime Commissioner and the chairperson of the CJC for investing a considerable amount of time personally into the development of this legislation, in the interests of getting the blueprint right for the next 10 years. Accepting the policy

of amalgamation, both the CJC chair and Crime Commissioner have expressed their satisfaction with this bill.

The CJC chair and the Crime Commissioner have particularly assisted with the technical aspects of the bill in which their organisations have expertise. This is a very complex piece of legislation that is the subject of ongoing and intense scrutiny. It is predictable that in a bill of this size and complexity some further technical amendments may be needed prior to passage.

Finally, I would like to thank staff in my department who have laboured hard over this bill, especially Philip Green, Tony Keyes and, in particular, Louisa Pink. As always, I appreciate the excellent work of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, particularly Steve Berg, in this instance. This bill starts a new era for the Fitzgerald reform agenda. No doubt there will be critics from various areas, from the reactionaries, those lacking vision and those with self interest. We will not be deterred. This is in the interests of the state. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

OMBUDSMAN BILL

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.55 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to establish an office of ombudsman for investigating administrative actions taken by, in or for certain agencies, and recommending to agencies ways of improving administrative processes, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Beattie, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (12.56 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Before the 1998 election, I promised to work with the Ombudsman to revamp the office and to modernise the legislation. This bill delivers on that promise by replacing and rewriting the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974. It is another plank in my government's commitment to public sector integrity.

This bill is commonsense. It merely pulls together provisions from other legislation such as the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950 and the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995, and enshrines current practices of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee into the one place. I stress that, because it is important. The bill does not represent substantial changes. I repeat: the bill does not represent substantial changes. It improves transparency and provides a legislative basis for the continuing revitalisation of the Ombudsman's office.

The bill formalises the oversight role of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee. This will ensure appropriate managerial oversight of the Ombudsman's office by the bipartisan parliamentary committee and enhance consumer protection for all Queenslanders who are concerned about government action. The parliamentary committee will not be able to dabble in individual complaints as is currently the case under the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995.

The role of LCARC is entirely consistent with the role of other bipartisan parliamentary committees that oversight other independent bodies, such as the role of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee's role in overseeing the present Criminal Justice Commission, and the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee oversight of the Queensland Audit Office.

There was a report in today's *Courier-Mail* in relation to this legislation. As members can see from what I have said, that report is simply wrong, wrong, wrong. We have released a discussion draft that has been consulted to death. There have been three non-government reports in relation to this. The facts speak for themselves. The report in the *Courier-Mail* is simply wrong. I refer members to the Ombudsman's introduction in his 1995-96 report, in which he says—

... I report to the Legislative, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee. As the Ombudsman is an officer of Parliament, the Committee will be the conduit which relates my Office to the Parliament itself.

I add that we are simply ensuring that the Ombudsman has the appropriate legislative arrangements in place. In essence, this bill represents no change in practice. It is about management oversight. LCARC will not be able to direct the Ombudsman, and I make that point very clear. The current powers of LCARC are contained in the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995 and the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974, and include: administrative review reform; the role in the appointment, suspension, and removal of the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman's budget; and the conduct of strategic reviews of the Ombudsman where they are consulted about the reviewer and terms of reference.

The Wiltshire report stated that the Ombudsman would benefit greatly from greater involvement with the parliament and key committee and recommended an increased role for the oversight committee. The bill does propose to give LCARC a function of monitoring and reviewing the functions of the Ombudsman under the bill. This power was included as a result of the Wiltshire review, which recommended increased oversight by the parliamentary committee, but it substantially reflects no change in the practice. It just puts the practice in the bill.

LCARC is a bipartisan parliamentary committee and is independent from the executive arm of government. Other independent bodies are oversighted by parliamentary committees, such as the Queensland Audit Office by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and the present Criminal Justice Committee by the PCJC. As is presently the case, LCARC is not able to review how the Ombudsman handles individual complaints. LCARC will have no power to direct the Ombudsman with respect to any matter—merely oversight and review. It is looking only at management issues; it is not looking at reconsidering or reviewing reports, findings, recommendation or decisions. As I said again, the *Courier-Mail* report is wrong.

The bill should not be viewed in isolation. It is part of broader reforms that mark a new era for public integrity and accountability in Queensland. Just as the Crime and Misconduct Commission Bill heralds the emergence of a revitalised, refocused commission better equipped to serve Queensland into the future, so does the Ombudsman Bill herald the emergence of a revitalised Ombudsman's office.

Since 1974, the Ombudsman's office has provided an essential service to Queenslanders, giving them an avenue of redress against mistakes in government administration. There have been a number of reviews of the office since 1998.

In light of the time, I seek to incorporate the rest of my remarks in *Hansard* for the information of the House.

Leave granted.

It is clear from the recent reviews that there is room for improvement in the way that service is delivered. Professor Kenneth Wiltshire's strategic review was commissioned by the Borbidge Government, and reported soon after the 1998 election. In 1999, the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee reported on the Wiltshire review. Also in 1999, the House resolved that I commission a strategic management review of the Ombudsman's office. The resulting report by The Consultancy Bureau was tabled in June 2000. Most of the recommendations from those reviews are internal management issues for the Ombudsman's office, and will be addressed by the new Ombudsman as part of his functions. However, the Bill will support their implementation.

The Bill will make the Ombudsman more responsive in dealing with Queenslanders' complaints against government agencies. For example, the bill enables the Ombudsman to resolve complaints informally. The bill also enables the Ombudsman to help public sector agencies to deal proactively with systemic issues, just as the new Crime and Misconduct Commission Bill will focus the commission on continually improving conduct in public administration. The reviews also made some recommendations for legislative amendment.

The bill implements the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee's recommendation by establishing the committee's specific functions in relation to the Ombudsman. LCARC is a bipartisan parliamentary committee and is independent from the executive arm of government. Oversight by LCARC is both appropriate and important to ensuring that the revitalisation of the Ombudsman's office continues.

The bill also implements LCARC's recommendations by making a name change to Ombudsman and providing a 10-year cap on a person's appointment as Ombudsman.

The bill will clarify a number of jurisdictional issues that have arisen under the 1974 act. For example, the bill clarifies that non-operational and non-disciplinary administrative actions in the Queensland Police Service are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

The bill also does away with the 1974 act's archaic provision that deems the Ombudsman to be a standing royal commission. Instead, the bill replaces the existing Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950 powers with stand-alone powers. These provisions are tailored to the office's needs, and will ensure accessibility to the relevant provisions in the one act.

They observe fundamental legislative principles, but will ensure that agencies comply with the Ombudsman's requests during an investigation.

The stand-alone powers in the bill include the power to require a person to give a document, create a document or attend before the Ombudsman to give a document or answer questions. It is an offence if a person fails to comply with the requirement and the Ombudsman may request that a magistrate issue a subpoena requiring attendance of the person before the Ombudsman. If the person continues to fail to comply, the Ombudsman may seek an arrest warrant from a magistrate to cause the person to attend before the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman also has power to enter and inspect a place occupied by an agency and take extracts from, or copy, documents located in the place.

The bill also makes the Ombudsman more accessible to people who do not speak English, are illiterate or have a disability, by allowing complaints to be received orally and requiring the use of interpreter and other appropriate assistance. In other respects, the Bill modernises the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974 so that it is more readily intelligible for Queenslanders.

The bill was the subject of extensive consultation. The Ombudsman was consulted closely, and on 25 August 2001 the bill was released for public comment.

I record my appreciation to the immediate past Ombudsman, Fred Albietz, for the constructive way in which he began implementation of the review recommendations. Mr Albietz has retired, having held the position of Ombudsman for 10 years. Mr Albietz has had a distinguished career as Queensland Ombudsman and should be congratulated for his exemplary service to the people of this State.

I also look forward to working with Queensland's new Ombudsman, David Bevan, in continuing that process. On 9 August 2001, the Governor in Council approved the appointment of Mr David Bevan as Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations for a term of three years. Mr Bevan, formerly the director of the Official Misconduct Division of the Criminal Justice Commission, brings a wealth of legal and managerial experience to the role, particularly in the area of complaints resolution. The recruitment process for Mr Albietz's successor commenced in 2000. The process complied with all the requirements of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974.

I lay upon the table of the House copies of the appropriate correspondence between myself and the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee of the 50th Parliament regarding the appointment, together with Mr Bevan's curriculum vitae. On behalf of all members, I wish Mr Bevan the very best for this new and challenging role.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.02 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (2.30 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Ambulance Service Act 1991 and the Fire and Rescue Authority Act 1990, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel) read a message from His Excellency the Governor recommending the necessary appropriation.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Reynolds, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland) (2.31 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Emergency Services staff and volunteers have a long and proud history supporting Queensland communities and this government has a proud tradition of supporting frontline service providers. This bill continues that tradition and provides the foundation for future developments in emergency services throughout Queensland.

Coordinated emergency services management began in Queensland in 1989. Prior to that time, 96 separate Ambulance Transport Brigade Committees ran ambulance services under a Queensland Ambulance Service Board, and fire services were provided through 81 Local Fire Brigade Boards. From 1989, all emergency service providers were placed under the umbrella of a single administrative organisation within the Police and Emergency Services portfolio.

Consolidating emergency services under one organisation, and refining those arrangements over the past decade, has achieved many efficiencies and improvements in service delivery to all

Queenslanders. Those efficiencies have been recognised by all communities and all parties, and it highlights that significant improvements can be achieved by progressively applying recognised business principles to public sector organisations.

In 1997, the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority were created as statutory authorities with their own separate boards by the coalition government. When the Beattie government was elected, serious funding concerns were encountered. The independent PricewaterhouseCoopers report confirmed the parlous financial position of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and questioned the relevance of the statutory authority and board structure.

Our initial response as a government was to provide a \$25.5 million rescue package to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. This was followed by consolidation of the Rural Fire Service funding allocation and an injection of capital funding for the modernisation of the urban and rural fire appliance fleets as well as modern equipment. I am sure honourable members would agree that that modernisation can be seen right across the state.

In addition, the Beattie government has provided the Queensland Ambulance Service with an additional \$25 million per annum to support the free ambulance to pensioners policy; approximately \$20 million per annum to enhance service delivery; and in excess of \$22 million to pay for the ambulance enterprise partnership agreement.

Capital funding has also been provided to modernise the fleet of ambulance vehicles and approval has been given to allow full cost recovery to be charged for ambulance transportation and interhospital transportation charges. Counter Disaster and Rescue Services has received approximately \$8.5 million per annum to improve support to volunteers through improved equipment, training and support, disaster mitigation and management, enhanced helicopter rescue services, flood boat replacement and VMR/Coast Guard support.

Over the past three years the government has provided more than \$115 million in additional funds. Firefighters, paramedics, volunteers and communities have seen and experienced the benefits of this investment in computer-aided dispatch technology, training, equipment, public education programs, new appliances, vehicles and facilities. There will be no change whatsoever to that approach. In fact, the changes seek to provide more support to frontline services and more opportunities to build on those magnificent achievements.

In 1998, the Beattie government passed legislation abolishing the board structure and, as a result, achieved annual savings in excess of \$300,000. Those savings were directed, and will continue to be directed, to front-line service delivery. This bill clarifies the lines of accountability by changing the status of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and the Queensland Ambulance Service from statutory authorities to divisions of the Department of Emergency Services. The principal objectives are to strengthen corporate governance, improve coordination and better manage resources within the portfolio. This legislation provides for enhanced collaboration and cooperation across emergency services for the benefit of Queenslanders.

In making these changes, the name of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority will be changed to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. Experience has shown that statutory authority status, of itself, provides no tangible benefits to service delivery or community outcomes. Statutory authority status has, however, encouraged a feeling of separateness and independence from the department, resulting in unnecessary duplication of resources which has hindered the coordination of efforts to deliver the department's services in line with government priorities.

The passage of this bill will clarify the relationship between the department and the operational arms of the portfolio and encourage greater integration and collaboration, while still proudly recognising the roles and histories of our operational services. The department is committed to the Employment Security Policy which sets out the government's policy on employment security and major organisational change. The policy clearly affirms the government's commitment to job security for permanent employees and minimises the impact on employees generally in organisational change situations.

Today, I emphasise that the bill will not affect the roles, responsibilities or functions of operational firefighters or ambulance officers and there will be no change to their entitlements. Fire and ambulance officers will remain as public sector employees under their own acts and fire and ambulance commissioners will retain responsibility for operational decisions.

The requirement under the current Fire and Rescue Authority Act 1990 that stipulates that the head of the Fire Service must have operational firefighting experience will not change. Fire levies collected on property rates will still be paid into a special fire service fund.

This bill recognises and demonstrates this government's commitment to best practice, sound business management principles, and our commitment to frontline service delivery throughout Queensland. The legislation is clearly designed to strengthen corporate governance, minimise duplication across the agency, target inefficiencies and maximise the benefits for every taxpayer dollar.

This financial year, the Beattie government committed \$517.5 million to the Department of Emergency Services and that investment needs to be managed in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The bill seeks to provide the best possible emergency services to all Queenslanders, ensure frontline officers are well trained, well equipped and working in a cooperative manner.

The Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2001, recognises and demonstrates this government's commitment to coordination and collaboration by our emergency services and a strategic focus on service delivery to all Queenslanders. It clearly demonstrates our commitment to the Safer and More Supportive Communities initiative of the Beattie government. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lingard, adjourned.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (2.40 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend legislation administered by the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Bredhauer, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (2.41 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The objective of this bill is to provide for a range of amendments to a number of acts administered by my Departments of Transport and Main Roads. The continued use of transport legislation amendment bills allows the consolidation of the amendments into a single bill rather than their progression as a series of bills. The amendments can be categorised as either improvements to existing legislation or providing legislation to support new or revised government policy. Typically, improvements are derived from the receipt of legal advice or are a result of court findings. Sometimes improvements are identified simply through reviewing the operation of the legislation over time. The majority of the amendments in this bill fall into one of these categories, although some significant new policy issues are also addressed. Firstly, I will run through the background to some of the key improvements the bill proposes.

The Civil Aviation (Carriers' Liability) Act 1964 adopts and applies as state law key provisions of the Commonwealth's act of the same name. The Commonwealth and state acts work cooperatively to provide a scheme of legislation dealing with matters such as the insurance requirements imposed on civil aviation carriers. One aspect of the law is that civil aviation carriers are required to have in place passenger insurance as a condition of their operation. Following legal advice, the bill proposes an amendment to the Civil Aviation (Carriers' Liability) Act 1964 to remove any doubt about the capacity of the state to impose a monetary penalty on a corporation which breaches this requirement of the act.

The Tow Truck Act 1973 currently contains an appeal process that is based on a tribunal system. This is very cumbersome in its establishment and operation. A generic mechanism for review and appeal rights against legislative decisions is available under the Transport Planning

and Coordination Act 1994. By repealing the tribunal system, the bill will allow appeals under the Tow Truck Act 1973 to be brought into line with this act.

The Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 is divided into chapters—one for each of the different modes of transport, such as road, rail or port infrastructure. Amendments are proposed to the roads chapter to deal with issues arising from the deregulation of the telecommunications industry in 1997. There are now six to 10 service providers involved in the installation of telecommunications cables within roads in Queensland. The amendments proposed will ensure Main Roads—

- has improved powers to apply conditions to installations of mobile phone towers and cables in roads; and
- is able to reduce the costs it pays when telecommunications plant which conflicts with planned roadworks requires relocation.

Amendments are proposed to the rail chapter concerning the defining of future railway land. This category of land is required to allow a railway manager to be accredited during the planning and construction stages of a new railway, for example, Airtrain. The amendment is to clarify that future railway land ceases to be future railway land when it is leased to a railway manager and becomes a new rail corridor.

A number of strategically important tunnels in the state's rail network, particularly between Roma Street and Brunswick Street stations, are held by Queensland Rail by way of an easement. The amendments proposed will ensure Queensland Rail is able to license use of the tunnels by other railway operators. This will ensure consistency with third party access undertakings and bring arrangements for the tunnels in line with the rest of the rail corridor. Also, some general amendments are proposed to the Transport Infrastructure Act in relation to dealing with water collecting on a transport route, protecting transport infrastructure from damage and recovering the costs of damage where a person needlessly or negligently damages infrastructure.

The Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 presently provides for a shipping inspector to direct the master of a ship which is found to be unsafe to immediately take the ship to a nominated mooring or port. However, the act does not provide for a shipping inspector to direct a ship if the ship is found to be unregistered or inappropriately registered or being operated by an unlicensed master or crew. The proposed amendments rectify these formerly unseen circumstances and remove the potential for stranding of ships and crew because of registration or licensing breaches.

In respect of the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act, it is proposed to broaden the ability of the chief executive to prosecute those responsible for the discharge of pollutants from a ship. At the moment only the ship's master and owner are subject to prosecution. It is intended, under defined circumstances, to include every other member of the ship's crew whose act caused, or contributed to, the discharge. The definition of 'discharge expenses' is to be clarified to ensure that costs incurred by the state in preventing a discharge or likely discharge, even if no discharge ultimately occurs, can be recovered.

A range of amendments is proposed to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act. Subject matter addressed in the bill includes changes to—

- evidentiary provisions with respect to vehicle related offences and the operation of Evidential Breath Analysers;
- the operation of the drug and drink-driving laws as they affect driver licensing;
- speed camera legislation to enable entities, such as companies, to be nominated as the responsible party where the driver is not known;
- allow the chief executive to have access to criminal history checks for persons seeking approval to be a motor vehicle examiner, driving instructor, et cetera;
- clarify that a person is to be disqualified absolutely from holding or obtaining a driver licence only when the person is already disqualified from driving by a court;
- not require the surrender of a licence if it has been cancelled or suspended due to excess demerit points. This is consistent with the national driver licence scheme.

The bill also proposes legislation to support some new policy initiatives. The completion of the South East Transit Project has seen the introduction of the busway as a new form of public transport infrastructure. As a temporary arrangement, busways have been facilitated under roads legislation. Due to significant differences in the form and operation of busways compared to

roads, legislation dedicated to busways is being progressively introduced into the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994. The first component was introduced by the Transport (Busway and Light Rail) Amendment Act 2000. This act dealt with many of the key infrastructure issues and with the powers for the acquisition of busway land.

This bill proposes to complete the infrastructure component of the busways legislation and introduce new legislation to assist in facilitating the operation of the busways. The final stage will be the completion of the regulations for busways. Key busway issues addressed in the bill include—

- enabling the chief executive to enter into contracts for busway infrastructure works and the operation of a busway;
- requiring local governments to obtain the chief executive's approval if they intend to erect advertising that could constitute a safety hazard for busway drivers;
- providing the chief executive with the power to approve works within the busway that are ancillary to its operations, for example, advertising, rest area facilities, service signs, et cetera;
- providing the chief executive with the ability to authorise busway use. Drivers of emergency vehicles are automatically authorised; and
- ensuring that an offence applies in relation to activities which are done without authorisation and damage the busway.

Finally, as a result of significant changes at the national level to the Australian code for the transport of dangerous goods by road and rail, each state jurisdiction is required to develop legislation for the carriage of dangerous goods by rail. The purpose of the legislation is to reduce the risk arising from the transport of dangerous goods by rail and to promote a nationally uniform approach. The operation aspects of the transportation of dangerous goods by rail is to be dealt with by a regulation authorised by the act. However, some important aspects of these amendments include allowing for the recovery of costs by the state in responding to a dangerous goods incident and establishing powers for dangerous goods investigators.

I have not attempted to cover every aspect of the bill but rather cover the key points the bill addresses. Further detail on the amendments can be obtained from the explanatory notes and of course from the bill. Transport legislation amendment bills provide an opportunity to keep our transport and roads legislation up to date with government policy and ensure that our transport and road laws are legally sound. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Johnson, adjourned.

WATER AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (2.51 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Water Act 2000, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr Robertson, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (2.52 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

It has now been 12 months since the Water Act 2000 was passed. In that time, Queensland has seen significant progress in terms of water reform, including the completion of a number of water resource plans. Work is continuing on their implementation through the preparation of resource operations plans. Other water resource plans are in draft stage, and information and data gathering continues in other parts of the state. Over the past year, some changes have been identified that can be made to the Water Act to improve its operation. Most of these are minor technical matters. The more significant amendments have arisen from talking with water users about ways to improve the act's operation. It is these proposed changes that I will now focus on.

In response to the concerns of water users, conservationists and other community members, the state moved to control the taking of overland flow where this activity was resulting in less water being available for existing users and for the environment. In a number of areas of the state moratoriums were placed on the taking of overland flow. These moratoriums stopped further development on flood plains until the availability of water for further development could be resolved through the water resource planning process. The difficulty was, and continues to be, that some people were part way through construction at the time the moratoriums were made.

The moratoriums attempted to deal with these situations by allowing people who had started works at the time of a moratorium to complete those works. A small number of users sought to take advantage of this provision by continuing construction programs that were going to take up to 10 years and would take increasing amounts of water. This had the potential to adversely impact on potential water allocations to individual users under the water resource planning process. In response to these issues, an amending notice was made setting completion dates for works that were under construction.

The government recognises that there are a number of water users who had legitimately started development before the introduction of a moratorium but, for a variety of reasons, may not be able to finish by the completion dates. This amending bill provides a mechanism for people to apply for an extension of time to complete works. To provide transparency to the process and give people an opportunity to be heard, these amendments provide for the establishment of a referral panel. The capacity for a referral panel already exists in the Water Act, but this adds a new jurisdiction to the panel to allow it to hear cases for extensions beyond the completion dates set in moratorium notices. The referral panel then makes recommendations to the minister. The minister's decisions with regard to these time extensions will then be gazetted to ensure transparency.

The amendment is accepted by conservation groups as a legitimate way to deal with exceptional circumstances. The change was prompted by farmer groups, and they acknowledge that it is a step in the right direction. Some interest groups would prefer that all works that have been commenced should be able to be completed. I acknowledge their view, but a balance must be struck between the rights of certain individuals to continue construction of works and the interests of the wider community. For water planning purposes, at some point a hold must be put on further construction to allow for an accurate assessment of what water is available for allocation to both water users and the environment. I believe that we have found the balance with these changes.

Under moratoriums in some major catchments, the cut-off for works is mid to late November. I propose to make an amending notice to allow people who had started works at the time a moratorium was commenced to apply for an extension to the completion date. I will also constitute an interim referral panel to provide advice in all cases. Once the amending act is passed and assented to, the arrangement will be formalised. In an effort to further deal with the problems caused by works on flood plains, the act also includes a capacity to require people in a specified area to notify my department that they are exercising their right to construct works on flood plains.

Under section 20(6) of the Water Act, unless a water resource plan or a moratorium notice has been issued, people may exercise their right to take overland flow water or subartesian water without the need for a licence. This amendment does not affect that right. However, it does require that, in areas of the state where we know there are some development pressures, people will be obliged to notify my department of existing works or works under construction. This notification requirement will supplement the existing monitoring activities being undertaken by my department. As members would appreciate, Queensland is a large state and my department does not have limitless resources. In situations where people remain free to take water without the need for a water licence, we are asking water users to assist my department in identifying how much water is being taken. This notification will help position my department to take a more proactive approach to water planning. It will minimise the issues arising from the start and completion date requirements which might arise from any future moratorium. Importantly, the notification provisions will also provide better security for existing water users, for those proposing new works and for the environment.

The Water Act represented the most fundamental change in water resource management in the state's history. Water resource planning is one of the most complex issues regulated by the act. We are committed to continuing to work through these issues and to make improvements

where they are needed whilst making sure there is sufficient water available for future generations. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

VALUERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 13 September (see p. 2721).

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (2.58 p.m.), in reply: In summary of the debate that was adjourned the last time we met, I acknowledge that the debate was brought on at a difficult time for my friend opposite. However, he was ably represented by the member for Warrego. The Valuers Registration Amendment Bill is another example of the practical reform agenda of the Beattie government. It brings in some important safeguards for the users of valuation services. It gives the community greater say in the standards required of registered valuers and greater confidence in the competency of valuers and improves the efficiency and administration of the Valuers Registration Act 1992 by the Valuers Registration Board of Queensland.

Legislation introduced into Queensland in 1965 provided for the registration of land valuers and for the power to investigate complaints and hear charges against them. However, nothing was done to improve that legislation until 1992, when the Goss government strengthened the act by including a code of conduct in the regulations. This gave the act some teeth and there was a benchmark for acceptable valuation practice.

In 1999, in accordance with the principles of national competition policy, my department carried out a review of the Valuers Registration Act 1992 and the Valuers Registration Regulation 1992. That review was advertised widely. Public submissions were considered, and representatives of professional bodies, community organisations and other government agencies were consulted. The review highlighted that land valuations are part of a wider market for property related services, some of which are unregulated.

The community is often the third party recipient of valuations, while not being directly involved in appointing the consultant valuer, and valuations are determined for valuation purposes, with the resultant valuation varying depending on the instructions given. This is often not understood by infrequent users of valuation services. In response to community concern, the government proposes to manage this risk in the short term by strengthening the role of the Valuers Registration Board of Queensland and introducing competency based annual renewal of valuers' registration.

Before commenting again on what this bill will achieve, I will outline the general purpose and role of the existing act. The Valuers Registration Board of Queensland carries out the administration of the registration of valuers. Currently the board comprises three members, who must be registered valuers. One is the nominee of the Australian Property Institute. A second is from practising registered valuers. The Governor in Council appoints both of these members. The third member is the registered valuer, who is the nominee of the chief executive of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. The chairperson is one of these three members and is appointed by the Governor in Council.

Currently the board is assisted on special assignments by two assistant members. Both are registered valuers, with one nominated from the Australian Property Institute and one from the Real Estate Institute of Queensland. Again, these assistant members are appointed by the Governor in Council. The board is responsible for assessing applications for registration as a valuer. An applicant for registration must pass an examination approved by the board, have sufficient practical experience and be of good fame and character. Upon approval, a valuer's name is included in the register, published every year. To retain registration, the valuer is required to pay an annual roll fee. The board also assesses valuer applications for registration as a specialist retail valuer. Specialist retail valuers are then available to carry out rental determination duties required under the Retail Shop Leases Act 1994.

The other important duty of the board is to authorise investigations of complaints against registered valuers or complaints of alleged practise by a person who is not a registered valuer. The board may appoint a person to investigate the complaints and may lay charges. After a charge is laid, the board appoints a committee of all board and assistant members to consider the investigator's report and hear from the accused. If the committee finds the registered valuer

guilty of the charge, it may admonish or reprimand the valuer, take an undertaking from the valuer to abstain from specific conduct, order payment of a penalty, or suspend or cancel registration. If the charge relates to an offence of alleged practise by an unregistered valuer, the board may instigate action in the Magistrate's Court.

Before I outline the major benefits of this bill in detail, I point out that the board is currently setting up an independent investigation into a complaint relating to actions of the board. It would be inappropriate to comment on this matter, other than to say that the investigation is yet to commence as the board is currently consulting with the Ombudsman to finalise terms of reference for the investigation. But as a result of this matter, and as mentioned by the member for Keppel earlier in the debate, a further amendment will be made in committee to the Valuers Registration Amendment Bill to allow temporary members to be appointed to the board to ensure a quorum in all circumstances.

The bill before the House expands the board from three to five members, provides for a quorum of three members to hear disciplinary matters and excludes members of the board from such committees if there is an apparent conflict of interest. For most disciplinary matters these requirements would be sufficient. However, if three or more members of the board had a conflict of interest then the disciplinary committee would not have a quorum. While the existing legislation provides for the appointment of at least two assistant members by the Governor in Council, this provision would not provide for a quorum in the example I have given.

The amendment to be made in committee to clause 6 of the bill enables the Governor in Council to appoint more than two members if necessary. Such additional assistant members would need to be members of the Australian Property Institute, registered valuers or, as included in the current bill, from a business, community or professional organisation. This new amendment will ensure that the disciplinary committee considering an investigator's report is sufficient in number and is impartial.

As the member for Warrego pointed out, this disciplinary process is similar to that applying to surveyors and engineers—the surveyors disciplinary committee is two-tiered—with the Surveyors Board considering an investigation and admonishing or recommending the matter be heard by a tribunal consisting of two surveyors and a District Court judge. Under the disciplinary process for valuers, a person may be found guilty after the disciplinary committee has considered an investigator's report and the accused has given evidence.

The member for Nanango expressed some concern that there is no right of appeal from a decision of the Valuers Registration Board. I can assure the member that the board's disciplinary committee is required to give a person under investigation a fair hearing. While this amendment bill does not contain a direct reference to appeal, section 61 of the current act already allows a right of appeal to the District Court.

The proposed amendments will also give the community greater input into the administration by the board by ensuring that representatives from business and the community have their say, in addition to the chosen registered valuer members.

The addition of continuing professional development as a requirement of a valuer's annual renewal of registration, as well as renewal on the specialist retail valuer register, will assist in ensuring that registered valuers keep abreast of changes in their profession. This will mean that no longer will a valuer or a specialist valuer, once registered, be able to continue to practise without any recognition of the need to update and refresh their skills.

The members for Darling Downs and Tablelands raised concerns about the ability of rural valuers to comply with continuing professional development renewal requirements. I can assure both members that valuers in rural and remote areas will not be required to travel great distances at their own expense to attend conferences or seminars to satisfy continuing professional development requirements. As the member for Kallangur pointed out, valuers in rural and remote areas have the option of keeping their valuation practices up to date by spending 10 hours a year reading journals or listening to audio tapes. If they are unable to meet this requirement, they can submit two valuation reports completed in the previous 18 months for consideration by the board. I do not believe that these provisions are too onerous, even for valuers in rural and remote areas.

The other changes in the bill will assist in the administration of the act with regard to concerns raised by the member for Nanango about payment of the valuers registration fee. I point out that the fee can still be paid annually, but in an effort to reduce red tape valuers can now opt to pay the fee for five years in one lump sum. The amendment providing for this also allows for

adjustments if there are changes to the fees or if refunds are payable to registered valuers who relinquish their registration. Currently the registration fee is \$69 per annum or \$345 for five years.

The member for Gladstone raised some concerns with the statutory rating and valuation process. This is a matter for another fundamental review, which is currently being formulated by my department in consultation with stakeholders and interest groups. An options paper is expected to be released by around March next year.

The member also asked whether the obligations of valuers registration applied to valuers employed by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. I can assure the member that departmental valuers are required to be registered and are subject to the same requirements of the Valuers Registration Act as are other valuers.

As I said at the outset, this bill is a positive step in the reform of legislation covering the occupation of land valuer in Queensland. The amendments will strengthen the administration of registered valuers in both rural and urban areas of the state and will assist in achieving the goal of self-regulation of these professionals in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr ROBERTSON (3.10 p.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

1. Clause 6—

At page 5, lines 6 to 9—

omit, insert—

' 6 Replacement of s 7 (Assistant members)

Section 7—

omit, insert—

' 7 Assistant members

'(1) The Governor in Council may, by gazette notice, appoint assistant members.

'(2) A person is qualified for appointment if the person is—

- (a) a registered valuer whose name has been submitted by the Australian Property Institute under section 8; or
- (b) a registered valuer whose name has been submitted by the Real Estate Institute of Queensland under section 8; or
- (c) another person who is otherwise qualified for appointment under section 6 or paragraph (a) or (b).'

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 27, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Robertson, by leave, read a third time.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 11 September (see p. 2576).

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (3.12 p.m.): The opposition has looked at this wide-ranging bill. A number of departments are directly involved. Of course, a bill of this type has lots of bits and pieces. It goes across the spectrum of primary industries in the state. As we understand it, the purpose of the bill is to amend a number of pieces of primary industries legislation and to repeal three other acts that are regarded as no longer relevant to the industries they represent.

The first act this bill amends is the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988. As detailed in the explanatory notes, the objective of this act is 'to control the use of certain chemicals and the use of substances in or on which is the residue of certain chemicals and for related purposes'.

Clause 4 provides for an amendment to section 4 of the act by removing a number of deficiencies and replacing them with provisions that are consistent with the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994—the Agvet Code. Doing so will make these particular definitions consistent across national legislation.

Clause 5 amends section 8A(1) to (3), which provides for the use of registered chemical products in contravention of a label. This amendment seeks to address a judicial interpretation of the section that was considered inconsistent with the policy intent of the provision. It is approved by the national regulation authority and will provide for labelling laws to work as they were intended to. As we understand it, a person will be required to use a registered chemical product in the way stated on the approved label, only subject to certain exceptions. These exceptions will apply only if the label is not prohibitive.

Similarly, clause 6, which amends section 8D, notes that a person will not contravene an instruction about using a chemical product to control a pest if the person uses the product to control another pest, unless otherwise stated in the instructions. The examples provided in the explanatory notes are appropriate for explaining the use of this clause, and they include where a chemical product is used to control another pest, including a disease or pest plant, and where the registered label for the product does not expressly prohibit such use; and the chemical product is applied in a different method from that set out on the label.

The opposition supports in principle the amendments made to this act as they clarify labelling laws. In addition, they also provide a rule of exception for either a primary producer or a veterinary surgeon who may, for very specific purposes, under a regulation, need to use a certain chemical product.

It is certainly okay to bring in this type of legislation. But, because we get pests that are very similar, often out there in the real world it is difficult for farmers and, in particular, those dealing with animals to comply absolutely with the controls over the use of chemicals. And, of course, one chemical might be able to be used across-the-board and be effective with other chemicals, even though the label does not provide for that particular usage. We do not want to be overly pedantic with the provisions of the legislation, but the whole intent of the legislation, and the reason for our support for it, is that provisions for things such as minimum residue levels will not be excessive; they will not go beyond what is acceptable. Certainly with many different plant and animal varieties we should be able to use chemicals that will adequately combat particular pests.

I would like to go on to the Chicken Meat Industry Committee Act. This is modelled on the New South Wales legislation. Its aim is to substitute annual contract registration fees in place of a statutory general levy on growers and processors by the Chicken Meat Industry Committee. The National Party opposition understands that this levy will no longer be used due to doubts over the constitutional validity of the use of state-based taxes. The legislation overcomes the issue by setting out the contractual obligations between the primary producer, the person who is growing the chicken meat, and the processor. I understand that the proportion of the costs for that contractual obligation will be about fifty-fifty.

In its place, as I was saying, will be part 3A—registration of agreements and annual fees—which will require a grower and a processor to enter into an agreement on which a registration fee will be imposed in order to continue the finances of the Chicken Meat Industry Committee. In order to maintain the list of agreements, a register will be required to be kept. We see this as a good method to monitor the number and status of agreements in the industry.

Section 24B sets out the application process. For the benefit of the members of the House, I point out that applications must be made within the time frames set out in the new section, in the form decided by the committee and accompanied by a prescribed fee. That is basically what we are talking about. The annual fee will be in the form of a flat industry rate per contract and there will be an obligation on the processor to pay half of that amount. However, we believe that it is important that growers are not disadvantaged in these commercial agreements because in rural and remote areas they may find that they have no choice in an agreement with the processor, but the fee will still be collected.

Clause 12 inserts a new part 5 into the act which provides a transitional arrangement for a grower and a processor who are currently in an existing agreement. New section 27 of new part 5

will provide that contracts already in existence will be treated as if they were entered into on the commencement of this section. In other words, new section 24B will expire six days after the commencement of part 5, because by that time it would have fulfilled its purpose.

Part 4 of this bill amends the Grain Research Foundation Act 1976. Its primary intention is to replace reference to the Queensland Grain Growers Association in the section dealing with the membership of the Queensland Grain Research Foundation. The QGGA has been absorbed by Agforce Grains, which now represents the state's grain growers. The minister informed us that currently there is an interim board for the foundation in its place. The opposition supports the amendment of section 7 of the act as it is vitally important that a board representative of the peak industry body representing grain growers is appointed for a full three-year term. I understand that, from the grain industry's point of view, it is imperative that this legislation is passed at this time. Although the bill may have jumped the queue, we are very supportive of the need for that to occur.

The amendments to the Meat Industry Act 1993 are contained in this bill for the purpose of winding up the Queensland Abattoir Corporation—the QAC—by the administrator who is running the affairs of the company. We understand that that will be achieved by allowing the administrator, through the insertion of new subsections 162L and 162N, to do all the things necessary to dissolve the Abattoir Corporation. In doing so, section 167, which creates the sunset date of 1 January 2002, will be extended by 12 months to allow the administrator to complete all the required tasks.

Bohle Pty Limited—the abattoirs at the Bohle—will operate the lease that has been granted until October 2005. After that, it is up to the Department of Natural Resources to decide what it wants to do with the land. The Bohle abattoirs is certainly reaching the point at which it is not as efficient as it used to be. It used to have a considerable number of yards. The land upon which those yards were situated has been returned to the Department of Natural Resources. I have to admit that that caused some concern, because the abattoir felt that that area may be useful as a holding yard for live cattle waiting to be exported. However, the decision has been made, the yards have gone and when the lease runs out the fate of the abattoir will be pretty much sealed. However, it will be up to the lessee to decide whether it wants to continue with the lease.

The abattoirs at Cannon Hill and Ipswich are managed by private operators. The Toowoomba Sheep Abattoir has been closed and Wagner's Concrete Plant now operates on the land. The Bundaberg Abattoir Reserve has been handed over to the Coordinator-General. I know that is a very sensitive issue. Attempts were made to keep that abattoir running, but the operation was small, it would be too costly to revamp the facility and a decision was made that it should no longer exist.

The bill also contains a couple of amendments to the Plant Protection Act 1989, which are intended to fix up what is considered to be a deficiency in the wording of section 3 of the act, which refers to the definition of an acceptable assurance certificate. In order to ensure that a person cannot operate another treatment method when they are not appropriately qualified, the amendment in the bill states that an assurance certificate is one given by the accredited person in accordance with the conditions of the person's accreditation. Therefore, I ask: is the authorisation for that certificate designated by the Department of Primary Industries? The opposition supports this procedural amendment because, hopefully, it will ensure that a person is correctly accredited and will enhance Queensland's position as a state that is treating its plants appropriately for any relevant pest or disease.

The explanatory notes referred to a relevant example to explain how important it is to have proof—a certificate for a particular method—of a person's competency. There is a concern that a person accredited to supply fruit sprayed with a particular chemical may issue a certificate, having fumigated them with a gas such as methyl bromide. That has been a fairly popular method of dealing with a situation such as that faced by the grape industry with the papaya fruit fly. It was almost impossible to dry the fruit out when they were using a range of chemicals to kill the fly. It became necessary to use a gas, because the liquid between the fruit could not be evaporated. It caused a great problem. Chemicals such as dimethoate and Lebaycid were used in the decontamination where there was any likelihood of the papaya fruit fly. I know that if we had not got rid of the papaya fruit fly at the time, the fledgling grape industry on the tablelands may not have succeeded in keeping its position as an early supplier of grapes to markets in the southern end of the state, New South Wales and Victoria.

So sometimes we have to make changes—it is necessary—but I think that we also have to respect the wishes of the other states. We cannot always determine what we would like to see

happen. They are the ones who accept the fruit and we have to comply with their wishes in terms of the way in which we treat the fruit. Although it may be difficult—and I know that during the period of the outbreak of the papaya fruit fly many growers found it tough to deal with these chemicals, to dip fruit and to gas it—the fact is that growers continued to supply those markets. Had they not been able to do that, they would have closed up because their production is well in excess of anything that their local markets in Queensland required.

There was concern that a person accredited to supply fruit sprayed with a particular chemical may not be in harmony with the requirements of the act. Although the process of either treatment would adequately satisfy the requirements of the ICA, when products are sent to other states it should be a requirement because of the threat of a pest outbreak. But because the person has not proved his or her competency in using that fumigation method and a potential risk could arise, the integrity of the assurance system may be compromised. As was noted, that could lead to the states refusing to accept Queensland produce or imposing a more stringent treatment regime involving supervised treatments at the grower's expense. As I said, it is difficult when we get these incursions, but unfortunately we deal with other countries and it is going to be particularly difficult to stop incursions in the future.

We have seen the fire ants and we have seen the crazy ants. We have seen a whole range of pests and, of course, diseases such as foot-and-mouth, the likelihood of BSE and so on. I think the key to any method of control is to get on to it very quickly. A program should be put in place where people are assured that they are going to be able to treat the problem within the minimum amount of time so that they can reduce the spread of the outbreak and then eliminate it.

The amendments to the Sugar Industry Act 1999, discussed in part 7 of the bill, are intended to give canegrowers an avenue in which to appeal to the Magistrate's Court on the time being taken for a cane production board to report back on a decision on, for example, an application for cancelling a cane production area. Any unreasonable length of time can be to the detriment of the grower's interests and return for a particular season.

As the opposition understands it, the courts will be responsible for determining what is regarded as an unreasonable amount of time for a decision to be made. This is a fair procedure. However, it is imperative that in the future the appeals brought against the cane production board are consistently ruled on by the court system, with regard to the broad impacts that non-decision making may have on growers in the industry. Of course, that is of particular concern because often the reasons that an area may not be able to be planted can be extremely important. Sometimes flooding is an issue and sometimes pests become an issue. Of course, a farmer in a cane production area has to have the security of knowing what they are doing in terms of their future farming activities.

Amendments to the Timber Utilisation and Marketing Act 1987 are intended to have regard to and afford consumer protection through the sale of borer, termite or decay susceptible timber by prohibiting, restricting and authorising certain conduct carried out by those who treat the timber. While it is not the intention of this amendment, it is really referring to timber that has been treated. As I understand it, it is not just ordinary timber. I did not see where the bill referred specifically to treated timber, but I understand that that is the intent. Because of the way that chemicals penetrate the timber, softwoods can be very susceptible. For example, it is easier to get copper and other materials that protect against mildews, termite attack and so on into the softwoods. However, it can be very difficult to get the chemical past the outside of hardwood timber.

The amendment will ensure consumer protection in two ways. Firstly, it will extend the time to institute proceedings for prosecuting breaches of the act, as the investigating and testing of timber before coming to a decision could take up to a year. Further, inserting new section 44A, Proceedings for offences, will allow for a complaint to be made to the DPI up to seven years after the sale of the timber. Even though such a deficiency would be more than likely to show up well inside this cap period, it affords greater protection to the consumer.

The second major part to amending this act refers to various interpretations in section 6. Its intention is to remove any references to the term 'duty' in describing the forestry officers' statutory responsibilities under the act. It is regarded as misleading to describe forestry officers as having duties under the act, as this may imply that they have mandatory obligations under the act. As has been pointed out, this is not the case, as under this act all officer powers are discretionary. Further, it has been noted as being essential for an officer to prioritise investigations due to a lack of resources to investigate every breach of the act. The opposition supports the clarification of this

section of the act and the importance of the officer having a degree of discretion on which cases will be prosecuted.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 supports a number of amendments, including introducing less prohibitive restrictions on the ownership and marketing of veterinary practices, the addition of a lay person to the Veterinary Surgeons Board and new section 25, which provides definitions of 'disqualifying offence' and 'information notice'.

The bill intends to implement a number of recommendations following the national competition review that was undertaken. Some of those include the following, and are contained in subsections 25 to 27 of the act: omitting any prohibitive practices relating to advertising, ownership and naming of veterinary practices; omitting any section of the act that restricts ownership of veterinary practices or control of the use of business names so long as it is approved by the board; omitting any sections of the regulation making powers that restrict the advertising of veterinary practices; and amending the professional misconduct provisions to remove the grounds of professional misconduct relating to advertising and using any title or description other than that contained in the description of the qualifications used for registration.

I have some concerns about that which I will raise during the committee stage of the debate. For example, what happens with approvals where there is a business that does not have a veterinary surgeon in charge? It raises some fairly serious issues that I will deal with during the debate on the clauses. However, the intention to enable more competition for veterinary practices is one that we broadly support.

Clause 37 inserts a new section 2A and section 3, which replaces the term 'veterinary surgeon' with 'veterinary science'. This amendment reflects current academic thoughts on describing the knowledge and procedures relating to the profession. Further, this then provides that a regulation may declare some animal husbandry and dentistry procedures not to be exclusively veterinary science. As we understand it, this would be reflected by a list of exemption procedures that will allow a person, within the regulation, to conduct certain animal husbandry procedures, including the desexing, dehorning and artificial insemination of some farm animals. We agree with the amendment as it provides a farmer, for example, who is well acquainted with a number of husbandry procedures to perform them given that they are listed as exempted procedures.

An important amendment to this act is the addition to the membership of the board of a layperson to provide a consumer perspective, which will take the board's membership to six members. This new section 4C also provides the minister with the power to nominate four of the members, three of whom must be veterinary surgeons and one a senior officer of the department. The addition of an ordinary consumer to the board is an important step to ensure that broader community concerns are voiced and can be reported back to the relevant primary industry.

Finally, in response to the amendments that have been proposed to the Veterinary Surgeons Act, we support the process of grouping together the offence provisions contained in the new part 4B of the act. It is a sensible procedure that will, hopefully, set out most clearly—presumably in the regulations—what the powers of the board are with regards to the penalising of a veterinary surgeon who, for example, may not be qualified to practise veterinary science.

I am concerned about the number of veterinary surgeons. Importantly, this issue was alerted to readers of *Queensland Country Life*, which reported on the search for additional veterinary surgeons in the state. Currently 6,400 registered vets are working in Australia. Of the 1,217 registered vets in Queensland, only 457 work in rural areas. The government employs only 57 vets in Queensland, less than five per cent of the total number in the state. Fifty years ago, half of all Queensland vets were government employees. The total number of vets working in Australia has jumped by 34 per cent in the past decade and doubled in the past 20 years. Conversely, the number employed by the government has plummeted to 30 per cent.

Female vets are generally well accepted by farmers, but they are not interested in continuing with full-time work in the long term due to family commitments and they are not interested in after hours work. A general incentive needs to be provided to encourage women with veterinary qualifications to stay in the bush and in the profession in some capacity. Ten years after graduation, up to 25 per cent of all female graduates have abandoned full-time work as a veterinarian. There are some major problems with maintaining the presence of veterinary surgeons in Queensland. We have a very big animal industry that is worth billions of dollars to the

state. It would be very disappointing if we could not maintain the presence of veterinary surgeons and those other people who have the capacity to perform minor procedures which do not require the expertise of a veterinary surgeon. That is an issue that the minister has to address.

I turn now to a couple of the other parts of the legislation. For example, the wheat marketing legislation is no longer required to underpin intrastate trading; we have the Australian Wheat Board as a single desk seller. That is similar to the process in place in the sugar industry and it is important to Australia and Queensland.

The Dairy Adjustment Program Agreement Act was enacted in 1976 as a Commonwealth and state agreement for loans to eligible dairy farmers to install refrigeration, milk vats and all sorts of other things related to farm improvements. That act is to be repealed. Loans still in existence under that legislation will be carried on, as I understand it.

Those are the thoughts of the opposition on this bill. We do not have any particular issue except that concerning the registration of veterinary premises where a vet might not be involved directly in the ownership of the facility. This has some similarities to a whole range of other industries. I know that in terms of national competition some might believe this is a good way to go. However, I think this will lead to the demise of groups of industry professionals who are not really being acknowledged to the extent that they should. In principle, we support the contents of this bill.

Mr Palaszczuk: Are you aware of the amendments as far as the veterinarians are concerned?

Mr ROWELL: Yes, I notice that is addressed. There is just the issue of a vet not necessarily needing to be involved in the ownership of a veterinary business. I understand that that was the case previously. I think it could lead to a change in the status of the profession. Certainly, national competition policy has a lot to answer for. I do not think that change is in the best interests of the profession and maintaining the presence of veterinary surgeons in the Queensland.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (3.44 p.m.): It is a pleasure to speak to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill, as I am a member of the minister's rural council formed after the last state election. Although I represent an electorate that is based principally on a provincial city, the connections between Toowoomba North, Toowoomba generally and rural and regional Australia are strong indeed. Many people who reside in that city have come from the Darling Downs or the south-west and other regions surrounding the city of Toowoomba. It has a close and real connection with the land.

There are two aspects that I wish to touch on with respect to this legislation that are of a general nature. They relate to a task that I had the pleasure of performing for the Minister for Primary Industries in attending the launch of the Australian Catholic Bishops Social Justice Statement a week or two ago and also a task that I had to perform recently for the Premier in opening an extension to the Woolworths distribution centre at Warwick. I believe both of these issues touch very much on primary industry and rural and regional Queensland.

However, before addressing those matters I congratulate the minister on the preparatory work done by him and his department with respect to this bill, which is aimed at better regulation of primary industry in Queensland, particularly as it touches on grain research, the chicken meat industry, the timber industry, veterinary surgeons, the meat industry and the sugar industry. A lot of work goes into these types of bills, and I congratulate the minister on the effort that has been made to bring provisions covering these primary industries up to scratch in the 21st century.

As I said, by their nature, these types of bills are concerned primarily with country and provincial—that is, rural and regional—Queensland. By definition, rural and regional Queensland comprises the 30 per cent of the population who live on farms or in cities or towns in locations with populations probably under about the 50,000 mark. There are a lot of those situated on or near the Darling Downs.

As I said, I recently had the privilege of representing the minister at the launch by His Lordship Bishop William Morris, the Bishop of Toowoomba, of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Sunday Statement for 2001. The statement this year is titled 'A just and peaceful land: rural and regional Australia in 2001'. Bishop Morris' message stated—

As the statement highlights, Catholic Social Teaching regards the problems of rural communities in the context of social justice based on human dignity rather than in the framework of mere economic activity. It focuses repeatedly on rural-urban equity, the personal worth of farmers and rural people and the requirements of stewardship of God's creation.

In other words, economic considerations are not the only things for consideration. This morning I noted with some pleasure that the Premier, in referring to the late William Gunn, quoted his comment that in order for people to be encouraged to stay in country areas amenities have to be supplied by government. These are all comments and arguments supporting the same thing.

Rural and regional Australia in 2001 has become a topic of grave concern to this government, to all responsible governments in Australia and all church bodies. Things have changed greatly in regional and rural Australia over the past few decades, as we all should know. Technology has developed to the point at which farming is now a science. Key regional and rural primary industry groups have dissolved and re-formed into other organisations and new industry and interest groups have had to form to protect the interests of farmers and rural and regional Australian citizens.

Amidst all this change there is growing concern that rural urban equity is slowly being lost in the world of globalisation and computerisation and, more alarmingly, that some Australian farmers feel that they are losing their personal worth in society. The launch that I attended on behalf of the minister highlighted the serious problems in regional and rural Australia generally and, of course, in Queensland. From what was said at the launch, clearly people concerned with these issues—the church, the state government and Australian society generally—have every reason to express those concerns about the future of the bush.

For example, 33 of the 37 poorest federal electorates in Australia are rural electorates. The rate of avoidable deaths in regional and rural Australia is 40 per cent higher than that of capital cities. Influenza and pneumonia rates are 94 per cent more frequent among rural women than urban women. Respiratory diseases are 71 per cent higher. Genital urinary diseases are 86 per cent higher. There has been a drastic increase in the reported incidence of substance abuse, low morale, depression, suicides and attempted suicides among Australia's rural and regional people. Aged care is a major issue. So, too, is youth unemployment, the drastic drop in the number of students who proceed to tertiary studies and the provision of services such as banks, doctors and post offices.

In a community of people who feel deserted and who are losing hope, that church and other church bodies have stepped up to hear their pain and believe in their dreams and be a source of some symbol of hope. This is what the launch of that social justice statement was all about. Clearly, the state government also has a role to play—and has played a role—in restoring the bush. This legislation goes part of the way towards achieving that aim. The Queensland government is committed to protecting the interests of the people to whom the act specifically applies.

However, undeniably there are still problems in rural and regional Queensland, as I have indicated before, and those problems will exist for some time yet. Sometimes politicians are accused of being ignorant or uncaring. In particular, as we approach a federal election, rural and regional Queensland is concerned that election promises will concentrate on national and, indeed, international security and the failures of major Australian companies, which have left thousands unemployed. People in rural and regional Australia are worried that their needs will be left back in the shadows. So I urge all federal candidates to remember the bush and all regional and rural Queenslanders to keep making their voices heard.

In regard to the Queensland government, I believe that we have heard those voices. We are working—and this bill is an example of that—to improve the quality of life in the bush. This legislation is an acknowledgment that things are changing in the bush and that the government's legislation and actions should reflect that.

Personally, my own dream for the future to help rural and regional Australia is to see an increase in actual decentralisation. I made reference to that in my maiden speech. I believe that fair dinkum efforts along those lines should always be promoted. While I am in this place I intend to play my part towards that end. I believe that if companies and government departments were to move their major offices into regional and rural Queensland they would bring with them more business, transport, amenities and services for local residents. This in turn would lift the economic sustainability of regional and rural Australia as well as the morale, for example, of farmers and citizens of the regional towns. I believe that the government has taken steps along those lines. For example, a number of government offices are situated throughout country Queensland and substantial portions of existing government departments are already situated all over the state. However, I am proposing something more dramatic than that.

In the non-government area, the state government can still play a part. As I said at the outset, I had the pleasure of representing the Premier at the official opening of a \$30 million expansion of the Big W distribution centre in Warwick recently. I understand that the state government, through the Department of State Development, played quite a significant part in the decision of Big W to initially set up in Warwick and, more recently, to expand its distribution centre by about 100 per cent. The new centre covers more than 63,000 square metres, all under the one roof. It is huge. It makes it one of the largest distribution centres in Australia.

That centre is a perfect example of decentralisation at work. There are certain physical conditions favouring it in the sense of its location in Warwick, being on the New England Highway, the major inland route from Brisbane to Sydney, and the Cunningham Highway, linking the Newell Highway, the major route from Brisbane to Melbourne. As I understand it, goods with a retail value of \$1 billion a year will be brought in, mainly through the port of Brisbane, and distributed from Warwick to Big W stores from Canberra to Cairns. This integral role that Warwick is about to play has already proven to be beneficial to all of the residents in Warwick and surrounding districts, particularly in terms of employment.

Prior to the expansion, Big W established a local recruitment policy and staff training program with the Warwick College of the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE. The government has been fostering this form of decentralisation not only through the Department of State Development but also through the Department of Employment and Training. Today there are 230 people, including 40 trainees, employed at the distribution centre. Not only was it good for the local employment rate but it will also mean that more pay packets will be spent in the local economy.

The other benefits that Warwick has reaped since the opening of the expanded centre include work for transport operators and extra business for local retailers, motels and tourism operators. Finally, as a finishing touch, the Big W distribution centre has further added to Warwick's rose capital image with a 350 metre rose garden along the front boundary. All of this is an example of how decentralisation is helping to strengthen a regional Queensland town. It is an example of the government being proactive in its support for private industry to establish these industries in regional Queensland.

As I mentioned earlier, it has been part of my dream to see a similar project occur in my electorate of Toowoomba North with respect to the expansion of the Department of Primary Industries base. My preference is for the transfer of a substantial part of its operations from Brisbane to Toowoomba in the future. There are numerous reasons why this move would, in my view, be beneficial: from the brilliant position of Toowoomba to other regional areas, to the present track record of the administration of Toowoomba's DPI and to the groundbreaking research that has occurred over recent years. The model for such a move—and one does exist—is Agriculture New South Wales. Its primary office was shifted quite successfully from Sydney to Orange in the late 1980s to the advantage not just of the New South Wales government but, importantly, the primary producers in that state.

There are of course obstacles in such a proposal, and one would not seek to minimise them. Nevertheless, if there is a will, the positive aspects of such a proposal greatly outweigh the negatives. At some other time I hope to develop that argument in more detail. However, the advantages for places like Brisbane, which is suffering from overcrowding and congestion and the costs associated, for example, in moving people to and from the city, can be obviated to a certain degree by the active encouragement of the transfer of these sorts of institutions to regional Queensland.

Undeniably, there is a major problem in all areas of rural and regional Australia. The statistics I mentioned earlier are the hard, material evidence that unfortunately proves this. But it is the loss of hope and desperate cries from these people that drive this point home, and drive it home hard. The Queensland government is doing what it can to address their changing needs, and this legislation plays a small but necessary role in that effort. We need to pay close attention to the changing face of the bush. We need to search for more affordable solutions to these problems. We need to act now before some people lose all hope. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.01 p.m.): This afternoon I rise to speak briefly to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. One aspect of the bill I want to address relates to lay people being able to operate private veterinary practices.

Mr Palaszczuk: Not the practice.

Mr JOHNSON: I know they cannot operate the practice, and I ask the minister to clarify that later. If this situation were to occur, what happens to the protection of the professionalism of those in the industry? This could become a contentious issue, because I am fearful that this could be the start of some form of deregulation of professional practices. The minister himself was a schoolteacher and his ministerial colleague the member for Yeerongpilly was a lawyer. The rights of professional people to practise in these fields should be sacred, because they have undertaken professional studies and have an understanding of the profession they have graduated in. It is different to allow lay people who are not, say, a mechanic or a chef to operate and own a garage or a cafe. However, this provision relates to science. My concern is that, if we are going to see a form of deregulation, how will it be devised? I spoke to my colleague the member for Gladstone a while ago in relation to doctors. People in such professions have a right to operate in a professional way, whether they are a one-person practice or own a practice with four or five other professionals. I raise this issue today because I am concerned about it, and I hope the minister will elaborate on it.

There are veterinary practices throughout the state. It is an industry that has been subjected to downturns over time, especially in the livestock industry when there are low commodity prices. When prices are low, those in the livestock industry do not call on vets as often as they do at other times. Now that commodity prices are up, vets are a very important and integral part of that industry. Whether it is in meat inspection services through AQIS or whatever, these professionals have a right to be in a stand-alone operation. There are veterinarians in many facets of the minister's own Department of Primary Industries, and the director-general of the department is a veterinarian. That is why I urge caution. I have raised this issue with the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, and he raised it in his contribution to the debate. So I would ask the minister to elaborate on that when he sums up the debate.

There is another issue I want to touch on today. There are thousands of issues relating to all manner of things that go on in our electorates. However, this is an opportunity to raise the issue of meat inspection services in western Queensland, especially the AMLC inspector at Longreach. Last week my office was informed by the appropriate authorities that that officer had been transferred to Rockhampton. That disturbs me somewhat, because there is a thriving kangaroo meat industry in the central west. From time to time in the past there have been differences between shooters, accreditation licensing and the responsible officers. On most occasions those problems have been able to be solved through an exchange of dialogue. At the same time, it is very important that that officer be retained in the central west. Again, this is a downgrading of services. It is another example of the government turning its back on the industry, whether it be the roo shooting industry or the meat industry. Over time we have seen many abattoirs close in western Queensland because of changes required by legislation.

Recently, the Aramac butchery closed because requisitions were issued on it and the Bowden family did not want to continue the business. That is unfortunate. It means that another small business has gone from a western Queensland town. It means that another family business has shut down. It means that another couple of jobs have gone from the town. In this particular instance, it means that three jobs have gone. How long will it be before we see another butchery close somewhere else?

Last week I wrote to the Department of State Development and also spoke with the Minister for State Development in relation to the upgrading of the facilities of the Barcoo butchery in Blackall. That is a magnificent operation which is currently supplying meat to many shops throughout the central west, the central highlands and the Rockhampton region. It currently employs about 12 or 13 people. That business will double those numbers if the planned upgrade goes ahead. It will be a family business which will be advantageous to Blackall and will provide quality meat to the consumers of that part of Queensland.

These are important issues. We recognise the endeavours of businesses such as these and their commitment in outlaying huge sums of money. At the same time, we have to recognise the need for flexibility while going through this transitional period of upgrades. That sort of flexibility could have been applied to the Aramac butchery. Had we been able to work through a set of guidelines, it would have enabled that family operation to put in place the improvements to keep that business in operation. Unfortunately, the requisitions under the law as it currently stands and the costs involved did not allow that to happen.

I do not make these points lightly, and the minister hears stories such as these from time to time. There is legislation on the table of the House now in relation to health legislation and the sale of foodstuffs, et cetera, from street stalls. Where is it all going to stop? We certainly support

the idea of clean killing facilities for livestock, clean meat processing plants and the sophisticated technology we are accustomed to today so we can provide quality products to our consumers. While going through this transitional period, we have to ensure that these processors are able to enhance their operations without the great financial stress that could result in their not being able to carry on. Their only other option is to close. No-one wants that, especially the minister.

I urge the minister to take responsibility for what could be happening in a lot of these country abattoir facilities and privately owned operations. Right throughout the western region there are places that would be affected—places such as Prairie and Winton. The facility at Aramac has gone and there is nothing in Longreach anymore. The Longreach Pastoral College kills its own livestock as part of the instruction for its students.

Mr Foley: A very good pastoral college.

Mr JOHNSON: It is a very good one. I understand that the minister is going out there shortly to open the new dormitories. I think the minister will be justifiably proud of them. I know that I am, and I know that the staff and students of the Longreach Pastoral College are fiercely proud of them.

Mr Foley: They would be better than the old ones.

Mr JOHNSON: There is no doubt about that. They were hotboxes, I can tell you.

All we are doing by subjecting some of these operations to this type of stringent change is playing into the hands of the big players. When I say 'the big players', I mean that the meat is produced in those regions. Gordons Abattoirs at Miles is a magnificent little facility, and there are others dotted throughout country areas. In light of the integral role that those people play in the supply of meat to consumers in those country areas, I urge the minister to give these producers a fair understanding of how they can make these changes without being dealt with by the heavy hand of the law.

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (4.11 p.m.): The Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill is an omnibus bill. I will refer first to the Meat Industry Act. Through this bill we are divesting ourselves of the Abattoir Corporation.

It was very interesting to hear the member for Gregory speak about health regulations. Australia has a reputation for being clean and green because we have stringent health regulations. In order to understand how we gained that reputation members should ask their fellow members who have been on parliamentary delegations to some of the Asian countries, where goods are sold on the roadside, to compare our requirements with theirs. For example, in Vietnam one of the significant public health issues is goods being sold near the street corners. It causes a public health problem. We have stringent public health requirements in this country in order to avoid that situation, and I do not for one second want to see those watered down.

Ms Nelson-Carr: Mad cow disease.

Mr MICKEL: The member mentions mad cow disease. Mad cow disease is currently in Japan, the largest importer of Australian beef. I hope that the Australian product is not interfered with, because of our well-deserved reputation for supplying quality beef products there. I will develop that point in a moment.

The honourable member for Gregory also referred to family owned enterprises. I particularly congratulate a family owned enterprise that took over a government-owned abattoir at Cannon Hill, namely, the Lee family. Trevor Lee, in his establishment of Australian Country Choice, has developed a supply chain from the farm right through to the plate. It is an excellent, world-class facility developed in conjunction with the Queensland government by grants from the Queensland government, enabling a family firm to continue to employ hundreds of Queenslanders. They are the sorts of world-class facilities and job creation projects that the Food and Meat Task Force and the Department of Primary Industries, working together, have been able to develop.

I also pay tribute to groups such as AMH, which is based at Dinmore outside Ipswich. The honourable member for Gregory spoke about the health requirements. As a result of the significant investment by AMH, we can now trace meat back to the paddock from which the animal came if there is a health issue. The ability to make a quick response to a health threat saves our beef industry. It is what puts it at the forefront of the competition.

I give fair warning to the members around Ipswich that when the next shift at AMH is put on—that will be another 600 jobs—I want the people in Logan city, in west Logan city in particular, to be able to benefit from those jobs. I will not tell members what I will do, but when I hear about

those jobs being available I will make sure that the people in west Logan city are the ones fighting other people in Ipswich for those jobs. And I make no apologies for it.

The point about the Australian work force in the meat processing industry is that by world standards it is first class. It is a sector unlike that in America. In Australia we have to take on what is called the 'licorice allsorts' that are presented by producers. All sorts of breeds come before the processors daily. The Australian work force—the Queensland work force—is skilled enough to deal with that in a world competitive fashion. By contrast, in the United States, because of the extensive feedlotting, the same variety tends to come through, which makes processing easier. I pay tribute to the employees in the large and smaller meatworks around Queensland for the excellent job they do.

I also pay tribute to those meat processors in regional areas, such as Nolans at Gympie, who have developed a significant niche market, particularly in the restaurant industry. Also, the Warwick Bacon Factory has developed an excellent product in the Japanese market, creating jobs in regional Queensland. The message is that we do have a world-class processing sector with well-trained employees.

I know that the sector has improved, but we need to encourage producers to continue to dehorn their animals for when they are presented at the processing plants. When the animals are being herded up, one animal with a horn can bruise the meat or mark the hide of another animal, which makes that hide less valuable.

From a health point of view we have to work towards reaching the stage where primary producers give inoculations in a particular section of the beast so that when processors bone the animal they know where the cysts are likely to be. For example, I saw a situation in Innisfail whereby the entire plant was closed down because a cyst exploded on the factory floor, causing contamination to the meat that had been processed in the previous few minutes. The whole place had to be closed down and hosed out in order to enable a healthy situation to be restored in that plant. I encourage DPI particularly to work with the producers to see if it is possible to have inoculations for animals given in a particular part of the beast so that the processors know exactly what they are dealing with.

The honourable member for Hinchinbrook mentioned earlier the value that beef cattle are bringing at the moment. These days there is also a particular value in the hides, but that value is diminished if the brand is put right in the middle of the hide. In some of the processing plants I visited I saw evidence of producers diminishing their returns by inappropriate placement of brands.

I mention live cattle. In particular I am encouraged by the Queensland export of live cattle to Vietnam. The reason is that I believe, in time, that live cattle export will produce processing jobs for Queensland. The live cattle trade to Japan ultimately resulted in the trading of frozen boxed beef to the Japanese market. It is now our single biggest export. I encourage people to export live cattle to Vietnam, with the ultimate aim that we will be exporting frozen beef carcasses or frozen boxed beef.

In a recent visit I made to Singapore there was no doubt that we have supermarket market dominance in red beef there. Singapore still is a significant footprint on exports to other Asian markets. There is a significant presence of Australian red beef even in the wet markets, which tend to be free and easy. So it is certainly fantastic news for Australian primary producers and particularly Queensland primary producers.

While dealing with the meat industry, I want to mention also the pork industry. Last year we had the nipah virus in Malaysia, which presented an opportunity for Australian pork production to get into exports. It was not many years ago that Queensland pork producers were in a protest meeting spearheaded by, of all people, Pauline Hanson about the import of pork products into this nation. The important news is this: we are still importing a lot of pork product. So why is there not a protest? There is not a protest because, for the first time in our history, we are exporting significant volumes of prime pork cuts. In the supermarkets in Singapore in August, the air-fresh pork product of Singapore was also in almost complete dominance. We have a very large export firm—thanks to the help of State Development in Swickers at Kingaroy, which is helping to improve that market dominance and creating jobs in regional Queensland.

I also want to mention the contribution being played by Nippon Meats with its investment at Cecil Plains. I also want to congratulate the work being done in the Warwick area by the Miandetta piggeries. Last year we gave them a Premier's export award. They have a first-class export culture which their work force shares and they sell a first-class product onto the market.

Mr Palaszcuk: That is Ian Neilson?

Mr MICKEL: Absolutely—Ian Neilson. I want to congratulate Ian Neilson on the job he does in promoting that export culture, which is really needed there.

I also want to mention this afternoon—and the minister will be thrilled when he hears this—that in August, even in the fresh food and vegetable markets, Australia, and Queensland particularly, had a significant market presence. For example, in the Liberty store, which is the one that showcases American products in Orchard Road in Singapore, Caboolture strawberries were on display there. It was wonderful to see people from the Caboolture area selling their product as a fresh product in the strawberry line. The point is we were beating the Americans at their own game.

This afternoon I want to mention the importance of processed foods. I want to draw this comparison: at the 1980 Olympic Games in Montreal, I think Australia won either one gold medal or no gold medals at all. The upshot was this: there was such outrage amongst the people in the nation that they set up the Australian Institute of Sport, culminating, of course, in our wonderful success last year in Sydney. I want to mention somebody who won a gold medal in food processing—a gentleman on the Gold Coast named Peter Ingall from Mayfields Chocolate. He took his product to the premier place in the world for making chocolate, namely, Belgium. And what did he do there? He won the gold medal—the world gold medal—for chocolate making. Whereas I am enthused about that, the fact is there was no ticker tape parade for Peter. Nobody said what a great achievement that was. He shared his victory alone.

I would like it to be that a gold medal performance like that would encourage our federal government to get in and promote research and development. Instead of that, what have we seen? A cutback—a continual cutback—in research and development. It is a disgrace. The Labor Party's Knowledge Nation, of course, looks at research and development—that is the heart of Knowledge Nation—but there is no response and no encouragement for people like Peter Ingall in developing his product.

So that is why I want to pay tribute to a whole lot of people who are showcasing their products in Singapore. Last year when I went to Singapore the Fair Price Supermarket management met with me and indicated that they were willing to showcase Queensland products and Australian products if we could get them together. And I am pleased to say that, through the help of the Department of Trade and the Premier's Department and Supermarket to Asia, a number of Queensland firms have taken up that opportunity. So this afternoon I want to mention Australian Garlic Bread from Capalaba; Buderim Ginger from Yandina; Gelati Italia from Cararra; George Westons Foods Ltd from Kedron; Golden Circle Limited at Virginia; the Health Revolution at Ashmore; Day Dawn Holdings Pty Ltd of Sumner Park; Nerada Tea at Sunnybank Hills; the Paper Converting Company in my own electorate at Crestmead; Pauls Limited at South Brisbane; Suncoast Gold Macadamia; Weis Australia; Asian Foods Australia from Cairns; and Matthew James International.

Since I received this document I have received another interesting note, and it is this: in the past couple of weeks Suncoast Gold Macadamia and Australian Garlic Bread are both performing strongly in that supermarket, and Supermarket to Asia is working hard with a number of supermarkets to get those products branded and placed extensively in supermarkets throughout Singapore. In other words, we will be creating more Queensland jobs or more Queensland job opportunities as a direct result of that export effort. We need to be identifying those companies that have something special and working with them to ensure the capabilities of supply and developing a strong Queensland supermarket supply business.

I should also point out and acknowledge the fantastic work being done by the Queensland supermarket product of the year award winners—people like Medihoney Active, who have been treating bacterial throat infections with their product.

Mr Palaszcuk: That is Capilano.

Mr MICKEL: Yes, in the minister's electorate. The runner-up was Health Revolution from the Gold Coast—last year's inaugural winner—with a new light bar range of blueberry and apricot varieties, the world's first gluten-free, fruit-filled, low-fat, low-allergy health food bars on the market. The No. 3 was Jewelblest Pty Ltd from Cairns, who have value added to mango growers' seconds, achieving fresh mango with up to eight weeks shelf life under refrigeration, providing a product that is ready to eat, no peeling, no waste, no seeds. The No 4. went to Sunshine Foods for their 99 per cent fat-free balsamic vinaigrette. And No. 5 went to Gold Coast Tender Plus for their range of sandwich fillers.

In other words, there is significant regional opportunity and significant regional success in all of these things. So when people say we need to be promoting regional Queensland, they are dead right. And if you are from the Gold Coast, that is the place to be doing it as well, because they are the ones up there and winning at the moment. So there is every reason to be up-beat about Queensland's positioning provided we get together and give them that helping hand that Supermarket to Asia, the Department of Trade and Queensland State Development are providing.

The other thing that this act mentions this afternoon is the dairy industry. We have heard a lot about deregulation in Queensland. I know this has been painful in some districts. But the reality is this: when it comes to exports, dairying is a \$2.2 billion industry this year. And in Singapore at the moment Australia has significant dominance right across the food processing sector in dairying as well as in the fresh milk marketing sector in the dairy industry.

That opportunity has come about because we have made our dairy industry export efficient—\$2.2 billion worth of income for dairying companies and ultimately primary producers will share in that. So it goes without saying that we have to encourage our primary producing sector. We are winning when it comes to food processing, but under no circumstances can we afford to rest on our laurels. That is why we need a significant injection of research and development capability to help all of those firms in regional Queensland that may be off the beaten track when it comes to information. We need to make those firms information rich by making sure that they are aware of the latest grants that are available to help them or the latest professional advice that is available to help them. I encourage firms that want to get into the Supermarket to Asia program in Singapore to contact Alan Jebb, who is a remarkable officer. He is very passionate about the fact that we need to develop these markets in Singapore and, through Singapore, the rest of Asia.

I encourage the minister to keep on with the professional advice that I know his department offers to primary producers. I am also up-beat about our chances of developing better markets throughout Asia as a direct result of the contribution made by firms throughout regional Queensland.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (4.30 p.m.): This Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill is an omnibus bill that contains a large number of amendments to legislation relating to primary industries that operate in various rural communities. I state at the outset that primary industries is very important to this decentralised state of Queensland and makes a great contribution to our export industry. Over the past five years, total exports from Australia have increased from some \$96 billion to around \$154 billion a year. That is not just primary production; that includes mining and other exports. However, that figure gives a good indication of the importance of the export industry to our state and the important role that primary production plays in that industry.

However, there is a sad note to that. We have heard previous speakers talk about support for primary industry so that it can create change, provide flexibility, provide new opportunities, provide quality assurance assistance and so forth. Since the Beattie Labor government came to power in Queensland, we have seen from the Department of Primary Industries a combined loss of jobs, or jobs forgone, of some 550. That is jobs promised and not delivered and jobs gone. In some areas, the stock inspector is almost an endangered species. It is hard to find stock inspectors who can provide assistance and support. Members opposite talk about providing assistance and support to primary producers. That is a great example of how support has been ripped out of primary industries. In many cases, people in primary industries have been left on their own to achieve growth in their industry to the best of their ability.

There has been a lot of change in rural areas. Previously, I mentioned exports. An interesting fact is that Australia now exports more wine to Great Britain than does France. Areas such as the South Burnett, the Darling Downs, Tamborine Mountain and many other parts of Queensland that previously were not considered grape-growing areas along with the more traditional grape-growing areas such as Stanthorpe, St George, Roma and other parts of the state, particularly up in the North Burnett, are expanding their operations. The wine industry is becoming not only a possible export industry for those areas but also a tourism industry. That is a good example of the sort of flexibility that can be created in primary industries.

To have flexibility in rural Queensland, we need infrastructure and we need water. Since the advent of the Beattie Labor government, not one single dam has been built in this state. Places such as St George, Goondiwindi, Gympie and the Atherton Tableland have created flexibility through the provision of water. In those areas, if a producer experiences a tough time in one

industry or if their product is not in demand, they can change to other industries. People in those areas can move into value-adding industries, grow different types of crops, or perhaps move from broadacre farming to horticulture. That is where the real potential in this state lies. However, the Labor government has missed the boat totally. It takes years to develop these projects. Some four years have passed and virtually not one single dam has been put in place or commenced. That an absolute abrogation of the government's duty.

It is no wonder that Queensland has the worst unemployment rate in mainland Australia. Infrastructure such as dams, and particularly the Paradise Dam that was built in the western area of Bundaberg, can deliver jobs for young people, can provide extra opportunity, can allow for increased production, and can provide jobs not only for the smart people that Mr Beattie likes to talk about but also for average workers, such as people who want to do picking, loading, carting or driving trucks, or people in small businesses who want to be selling more pipe and irrigation supplies and so forth. The government does not understand the fundamentals of what helps our decentralised state, what can bring about additional exports, what can bring about a whole range of flexibility, research stations and small business—all the sorts of opportunities that go with the provision of adequate water—and that is a real problem. A great potential has been missed.

We have heard about how change can be difficult, and it can be extremely difficult for people on the land, particularly people who have been there for generations. Young people who have been through the agricultural colleges, the pastoral colleges and university are now coming onto the land and bringing with them new skills. They want the opportunity to be able to put those skills into practice. Those young people are very skilled in high-technology planning, laser levelling activities, tram tracking and high-tech planting equipment where seven or eight different operations can be done in one go, be it the planting of the seed, the moisture, the fertiliser, the chemicals, tillage, hilling up and so forth. This new generation of young farmers is very highly skilled. They need opportunity, and that gets back to what I spoke about in regard to water.

It is interesting to see some young women coming through the colleges and going into the cotton industry. They have taken active roles in bug detection, in the selling of chemicals, working for agents, working in management and in financing and exporting. It really is very encouraging to see the ability of these young people.

But there is change, and change is very difficult for people on the land. It is their home—maybe it was their parents' home—and they have lived in the district. It is very difficult for them to adjust to change. In recent decades we have seen change occur on the downs. People on smaller grain blocks once grew one crop a year and made a reasonable living from that. That has now changed. They have to double crop, they have to have larger properties, they have to have bigger machinery. That is all very costly and, coupled with the drought over the past 10 years or so, it has been exceptionally difficult for some people.

Owing to the good management of the Australian economy, there are now consistently low interest rates—probably for the longest time that we have known—a low rate of inflation and a low dollar, which helps the export industry. There has been some improvement in commodity prices. Recently, beef prices have increased. That increase has been aided not only by the low dollar but also by flexibility in the industry. The previous speaker talked about live cattle exports. Once exporters have a number of markets, they can set a base for the price of their product. When cattle in the north are going to reasonably good live cattle markets, that means that there are fewer cattle going to the fatteners down south. That creates an increase in the base price of beef for those who are selling on the domestic market.

At the same time many of Australia's primary producers have been able to develop new markets. Once we relied mostly on Japan and the USA—the USA for cow beef and Japan for the better cuts of beef. Now other markets have opened up. There are now live cattle markets to places such as Korea, Taiwan and China. That all helps bring about price improvement, which allows young people to come back into the industry. The industry is now starting to do repairs and it is putting new machinery and other equipment in place. That means that light engineering companies in regional country towns are doing better. On the weekend I saw a huge semitrailer load of cattle crushes coming from somewhere near Ipswich. The manufacture of that sort of product really creates jobs.

Grain prices have been okay, although I would not put it at any better than that. Cotton prices have dropped back a bit. The real problem in many of the grain-growing areas of Queensland has been the drought. Vast areas around Dalby, the Darling Downs, Chinchilla, Wandoan, Taroom and other parts of the state are dreadfully affected by drought.

I pay tribute to the federal minister for the exceptional circumstances grant. It was a very difficult process and he went out of his way to make it work. He went out of his way to make it fit the guidelines that were put in place by the state and federal ministers some years before. Now he has been able to put what one might call the icing on the cake. Drought declarations were already in place and I note that certain support mechanisms have been implemented. On top of that, the introduction of exceptional circumstances declarations give the additional support of lower interest rate assistance. That has been very good.

About a week ago, the federal government provided a very significant sum of money over a number of years to Lifeline in Toowoomba. Lifeline will be able to continue the counselling that it has been undertaking. That has been good. Also in Toowoomba, for many years Bush Connections has played a very good role in helping people to adjust and settle after major change.

We have seen the most change in some of the intensive industries. A couple of decades ago the pig industry moved away from being based on smaller studs. Now it is very much based on modern genetics and major intensive pork production. For example, it has focused on such things as individual production per sow in terms of the number of litters per year, weaned weights and so forth, feeding techniques, feed technology and veterinary practices. The pork industry made quite an incredible change. About three or four years ago the pork industry went through a difficult time. Now it is good to see that the export side of the pork industry has provided some good assistance to that industry.

The dairy industry has gone through the greatest change in recent times. There has been a great deal said about that and a lot of vitriol has been slung around from side to side. We should recognise that a package was put together by the federal government valued at almost \$2 billion. That package recognised the original amount that was put together on the advice of the dairy industry itself, which was based on a levy system in the retail price of milk and which had to be underwritten by the Commonwealth government. The original package would have meant that farmers could be subject to taxation, so the amount was increased to cover that. A further increase was made to cover farmers who were particularly disadvantaged by the changes to the quota system as opposed to those farmers who had relied mostly on manufacturing milk. The federal government has gone out of its way to do that.

We all know the true basis of deregulation. Whatever either side might like to say, one of the important tenets of the Australian Constitution, which we celebrate 100 years of this year, is that primary producers are able to sell their products across interstate borders without penalty. That started in 1988. A system has existed in Australia of voluntary regulation, and for decades the Victorian industry had agreed that they would not sell interstate in return for a subsidy that was paid to the Victorian farmers. Then they made the decision to deregulate and the other states had to decide to deregulate. The federal government followed with the compensation package.

We all have to admit that that deregulation process caused tremendous pain to dairy farmers in Queensland, New South Wales and, perhaps, Western Australia. The Victorians have benefited. I hear that they are getting a better price for their milk. The previous speaker spoke about Australia's dairy exports valuing some \$2.2 billion. The bulk of that comes from the Victorian industry, but that could have a flow-on effect to us if those good prices continue. There is potential here in Queensland. The cheese making plant that is being constructed on the Atherton Tableland and other specific products being developed in other parts of the state have the potential to provide exports and help the dairy price. It has been an extremely difficult time. At the last election, the member for Hinchinbrook announced our policy of providing financial support that would have assisted the farmers. It was very disappointing to see that the state government did nothing at a time when the good people of this industry needed help, as this whole thing knocked a lot of them for six.

At the moment, the price of milk is gradually creeping up a little. It still has some way to go. Maybe by the end of next winter the dairy farmers might be getting closer to making a living from the dairy industry. Pauls has worked closely with some groups to try to increase the payment that it makes. There is a move towards having a single price system that is based purely on production, rather than breaking it up into too many segments. That will probably be of some advantage. We must do all that we can to help the dairy industry and those families who have had to go through enormous change and adjustment, a significant drop in income and, in many cases, social dislocation.

I wish to talk about some veterinary matters and a meat matter, which others have spoken about. This bill makes some changes to the Veterinary Surgeons Act. One of the changes that

concerns us is the change to the ownership of a veterinary business. We have all seen the change that is happening in the retail sector of our communities. The big supermarkets, Woolworths, Coles, and so forth have gradually taken over. They are moving into service stations, and fruit and vegetables. They want to get into pharmacy but we have been able to keep them out of that so far. They want to be newsagents, they want white goods, they want clothes. Like the great white shark, they want to take the lot. We have to watch this very carefully.

For example—and the Minister should correct me if I am wrong—under this legislation Woolworths could open a veterinary practice attached to one of its stores and have a voucher system for 5c a litre off fuel at the servo next door. Before we know it, we have moved away from the principles and the policies that the National Party has of supporting small business and allowing for family-owned small businesses. Instead, we will move into the bigger conglomerate, corporate operations that, ultimately, will not be good for the profession and will not be good for small business. A small business that is able to operate on its own is ultimately better for an area than one big organisation that employs people virtually on wages.

Mr Palaszczuk: I will respond to that.

Mr HORAN: That would be appreciated. I turn to the matter of meat exports, and particularly assistance from the government and the Premier on a very important aspect.

I understand that some supermarkets or some meat importing organisations in Japan have sought the Premier's imprimatur on the quality of the beef that is exported from Queensland. At this time, a BSE scare exists in Japan. I think that they found one Japanese cow with BSE. To overcome any buyer resistance in the Japanese culture, it is very important that that imprimatur be given. I know that one has to be responsible in giving something like that. One has to have the advice of veterinarians, AQIS and so on to say that one's information is correct.

We all know that we have very stringent systems for inspection and clean and green policies and so forth. I understand, although I could stand corrected, that the Premier of Tasmania has done something like that with respect to Tasmanian beef. If we are looking at enhancing Queensland's export capacity, this could be an avenue that should be followed up. Marketing can be about perceptions. If we have the confidence and faith in our product to be able to stand up and say, 'Yes, we have a good product,' we should do everything possible to back that up.

My colleague the member for Gregory spoke well about small slaughterhouses and butcher shops in country towns. I know from my travels that there are some very good operations there. We just need some commonsense in dealing with those, that is, to still have the right level of quality control, but to do it properly. They are not huge works such as that at Dinmore, which puts through 4,000 head a week; they employ three or four apprentices and a couple of butchers in their town and they are very important.

My colleague the shadow minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, spoke about some of the concerns in the veterinary profession and about the need for universities and governments to look at incentives to get vets to go where they are needed in large animal practice instead of overseas to Great Britain. If ever there is an outbreak of disease in large animals in Queensland, we will need every single vet who is experienced in large animal practice to provide a barrier to the disease and treatment if needed.

Mrs CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (4.51 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 and in particular to the amendments that have been made to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936. This bill amends the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 to take account of a review of the act conducted under the auspices of national competition policy. The recommendations in the review were—

- to retain the provision for registration of veterinary surgeons with acceptable qualifications;
- to maintain an amended list of prohibited practices and review the list of exempted procedures;
- to remove restrictions on ownership of veterinary practices;
- to remove the restrictions on advertising; and
- to retain the controls on veterinary premises in the legislation, but relinquish control over the use of business names.

Several other procedural amendments have been made, including increasing the membership of the Veterinary Surgeons Board from five to six members and providing for a lay person to be appointed to provide a consumer perspective; incorporating the Trans-Tasman

Mutual Recognition principles; providing for a better approval system for veterinary premises; and modernising the act generally.

The Animal Welfare League of Queensland has warmly welcomed the amendments. I take this opportunity to thank Denise Bradley for her persistence and hard work in following the developments of this PILA bill. The Animal Welfare League of Queensland was first established as the Animal Welfare League of the Gold Coast in 1959. Started by a group of people distressed at the inhumane treatment of impounded dogs, the league would rescue from the pounds unclaimed dogs to avoid their being shot and would keep them until their owners, or new ones, could be found. Forty years later, the Animal Welfare League of Queensland is now located at Coombabah, in my electorate of Broadwater, and the objective of the league still remains to protect and care for homeless and unwanted animals.

Impounded dogs and cats that are not claimed from the nearby council pound by their owners after the mandatory three days are transferred to the Animal Welfare League, where a full assessment of the dog's or cat's suitability for rehousing is undertaken. This assessment includes a health and temperament check. The dogs are wormed, immunised and desexed before rehousing.

I am a proud dog owner. I have two dogs—a red Doberman and a cattle dog. My husband and I walk our dogs daily, and the cattle dog is currently running with me as I prepare for the upcoming Police Games 10 kilometre run that is being held in my electorate in November. Taj, the cattle dog, recently enjoyed a pooch pamper at the annual Animal Welfare League dog wash-a-thon, which was held outside BBC Hardware at Harbour Town, Runaway Bay.

I love my dogs and, when I visited the Animal Welfare League earlier this month, it broke my heart to see the large number of dogs waiting with hope in their eyes for some kind person to take them home. I am relieved that through the changes in this bill animal welfare organisations will be able to assist the public with desexing of their animals at a cost much lower than that offered by veterinary surgeries, thereby reducing the number of neglected, roaming and unwanted animals.

I am told that every litter of puppies and kittens that is handed in to the Animal Welfare League is from an unwanted litter of a backyard breeder. The Animal Welfare League has over 800 animals handed in to its care every month and, sadly, over 50 per cent of those animals will be euthanased. Staff at the Animal Welfare League were excited to report that, compared with the first six months of last year, in the first six months of this year the league managed to increase the 're-homing' rate for dogs by 50 per cent and 74.5 per cent for cats. This was achieved through a number of programs, in particular the Golden Oldies program. The Golden Oldies are the elderly pets of eight years and over who enjoy good health and still have a few years of love and devotion to give to a new family.

Under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936, the Animal Welfare League has been prohibited from receiving any payment or reward for veterinary treatment or medicines prescribed. The Animal Welfare League is a registered charitable organisation that raises funds through raffles, stalls, op-shops and donations from caring animal lovers. Members of the community are invited to support the Animal Welfare League financially in a number of ways. The kennel sponsorship program, at \$50 per month, is available to families as well as companies who wish to sponsor a kennel or a cat/kitten pen. The sponsor will receive a permanent sign on the pen of their choice. This is a great way of promoting a business and showing support for the charity work carried out by the Animal Welfare League.

However, the amendments to this bill will allow the Animal Welfare League to charge a small fee for veterinary services rendered which the league could then use to offset some of the heavy costs involved in carrying out its welfare work. It is envisaged that with the revenue generated the Animal Welfare League will have more resources to provide for education of the public on responsible pet ownership. In addition, the revenue will help to alleviate the heavy costs of providing the only 24-hour ambulance service for injured animals on the Gold Coast.

I am told that the Animal Welfare League has submitted support for the bill's amendment that removes the restrictions on advertising. By removing the restrictions, staff at the Animal Welfare League believe the public will be able to find specialist veterinary practices and make informed choices on their preferred veterinary provider.

With this bill, pet owners will have a choice as to whether they take their dog to a vet or to the Animal Welfare League to be desexed. This option will not take business away from private vets.

Some pet owners will still insist on going to their dog's regular vet. All this bill is doing is giving people who cannot afford to go to a private vet a cheaper option.

These amendments are expected by the Animal Welfare League. I know that, as I stand here making this speech today, Denise, Toni, Suzi and all the staff at Coombabah will be celebrating. This bill has finally found its way into the parliament, and it is this government that has introduced the vital changes.

Before concluding, I take this opportunity to acknowledge all of the volunteer workers at the Animal Welfare League. Of the 139 volunteers, 69 are resident in my electorate. The volunteers help in the op-shops and shopping centres. They take the dogs for walks and assist with fundraising. Anyone wishing to find out more can visit the Animal Welfare League online at www.awl.qld.com.au.

I congratulate the Minister for Primary Industries on bringing these changes to the House. I would also like to thank Mike Tandy and the department for all of their assistance in keeping the Animal Welfare League and me well informed. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (4.58 p.m.): In rising to speak to this bill, I pass on my appreciation to the minister for making his officers available for a briefing and for their willingness to answer any and all questions that we put to them. I thank him for that opportunity. There are only a couple of issues that I wish to raise in the second reading debate. There is one in particular that I know other speakers have already touched on, and that is the use of chemicals, under this new provision, according to the label. The reasoning behind this new restriction was clearly explained to me, and that is that there have been prosecutions which have failed in the past because the prosecution involved the use of a particular spray on a product that the label was silent on. Because of that silence, the courts have interpreted that the use of the chemical is at the discretion of the operator.

I do understand that. I would like clarification from the minister about this. In my mind—it is probably a bit simplistic—there are two categories of growth where products are used. One is food products and the other is things like weeds and non-fodder type growth. It was explained to me that if sprays that are used for tomatoes are used for capsicums, because of the gap in the middle of the capsicum it is able to act as a vessel. Therefore, the possibility of the residual levels being high is increased because of the capsicum. I understand the theory.

I want to know: will that same stringent control apply to non-fodder and non-food products? By that I mean that an owner is obligated to clear a lot of noxious weeds on their property. They may have found in the past that certain chemicals that have been listed for other weeds are effective on particular weeds on their property. If they use that chemical—and I am talking about non-food products, that is animal fodder or human food—will they still be liable to prosecution? I see that there are two quite significant differences.

I can understand the very stringent controls that the minister is putting in place for chemicals used relating to human health, that is, spray that is used somewhere in the food chain. I am more concerned about the use of sprays for non-listed purposes, particularly in the area of noxious weeds and weed control, when the specific purpose for which it is used is not listed on the label. It is effective. However, the way this legislation is written is that, if it is a broad spectrum application, those people will be caught up and will be in contravention of this legislation when the residual levels are really immaterial.

The second issue that I wish to raise relates to the section that deals with the winding-up of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation. While I understand this is just the finalisation of a process that was started some time ago and the rationale behind the winding-up was that governments should not be involved in things like abattoirs, I wanted to put on the record my concern that over a number of years now governments have retreated from involvement in what has been historic industry participation. The abattoirs are only one such industry. In removing themselves from that involvement they have also reduced the opportunity for people, particularly in rural and regional Queensland, to have access to those services—in this instance the abattoir.

Also, it is a fact that many producers and many residents of this state are provided with these services only because governments have been involved. The provision of some of those facilities has involved a high capital cost with a rate of return over an extended period of time. The only instrumentality or body that has been able to carry those holding costs has been government. Therefore, many years ago, with a vision for the future for the community, governments established things like abattoirs and railway lines, although I understand that this bill does not cover that. The state has grown because of the government's willingness to invest in these sorts

of high capital ventures. I just want to put on the record that, having come so far down this path, it would be a tragedy to see governments removing themselves from involvement in what are regarded as private enterprise situations. That may place at risk the future development of our communities, particularly given their decentralisation.

I turn now to the amendments to the Sugar Industry Act. The proposal is to allow a court to deem that a board's non-dealing with an application is a refusal. That was to ensure that the board actually did deal with applications under the Sugar Industry Act. When we discussed this the other day, it was explained to me that this type of deemed refusal is existent and has been introduced in other legislation, and I accept that. My question to the minister, though, is: if the purpose is to place an obligation on the board to deal with the application, a deemed refusal is little, if any, constraint. If I apply for something, I want the board to process my application. If the board decides not to because it is a difficult application, because they just cannot be bothered or for any other reason, and the court can say, 'The board has refused to deal with your application; it is therefore a deemed refusal,' I am still disadvantaged. I just wondered what the intention was.

Conversely, if my application was not dealt with by the board and it was then going to be a deemed approval, the constraint on the board to deal with my application would be considerable because if they do nothing I am going to get the approval by default. If it is a deemed refusal, there is really no pressure on the board to deal with it. I just wondered where the minister saw that this proposal actually placed some weight, some obligation and some responsibility on the board to deal with applicants. When I raised this, the minister's advisers said, 'This is the way it is structured in other pieces of legislation.' I am not arguing that. The same situation applies. If it is a deemed refusal there is really no pressure on the board to consider an application.

There is only one other area—and many things have been altered by this bill—on which I want to commend the minister. The changes relating to veterinary surgeons will create quite a different regime for the veterinary industry in Queensland. We went through a similar process in optometry and in a whole range of professional areas in which non-qualified people were able to own practices providing they employed qualified persons. So this is not new. I understand the principles.

I know that there have been concerns with the ownership of the practice, irrespective of what type it is, by non-qualified people. The risk was that their focus would be dollar orientated, not service orientated, and there would perhaps be an increased temptation for the directors of that company to give directions to the licensed, qualified professional people to act contrary to their code of conduct—indeed, contrary to the act that constrains them. I commend the minister. Clearly, within this amendment to the act it is stated that any direction that requires a vet to act contrary to their obligations means that the owner of that practice is also guilty. I think that is probably one of the greatest constraints that you can place on a practice.

I have not had any concerns raised with me about the non-veterinary ownership of practices. I have not received any letters, either. I know that quite a lot of concerns were raised about the changes relating to optometry and a number of other professions. I do commend the minister for ensuring that that very real risk has been identified and dealt with so effectively. I thank the minister for the opportunity.

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (5.08 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2001. This particular piece of legislation has become necessary to tidy up outdated acts that are no longer relevant and to amend a number of pieces of legislation.

The amendment to the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988 is timely. With ongoing community concern regarding the application of chemicals in farming situations it is vital that everyone in the industry is complying with set standards. The bill specifically prohibits a person using a chemical product unless it is registered by the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals. This ensures that these products are used in strict compliance with the approved label.

These amendments provide extra sureties for consumers, giving them confidence in our clean primary products. Some farmers have approached me with their concerns regarding overcontrol by government of chemical and veterinary products. After years of complying with ever-increasing storage safeguards and an increase in the education and training requirements in the safe and effective use of chemicals, they were worried that they were in danger of being overlegislated. They do recognise that it is important, though, for the health of our farms, farm

workers, consumers and overseas markets that confidence in our agricultural methods ensure our primary products are in high demand. This amendment can only add to this goal.

The proposed amendment to the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 takes into account the recommendations put forward by the review committee. Some veterinary surgeons have felt disadvantaged in their profession by certain restrictions to the running of veterinary practices. We all know the problems that rural and regional Queensland has in attracting and retaining these practices. The restrictions placed on advertising, which this bill will lift, can only help to encourage a further upturn of work and investment in our rural towns. By opening up the ownership of veterinary practices to non-veterinary surgeons and welfare organisations, there should be a resultant easing of pressure for this aspect of service provision. I look forward to seeing the results of these amendments.

Another important amendment is expanding the Veterinary Surgeons Board from five to six members to make provision for a lay person to be appointed to the board to provide a consumer perspective to veterinary services. In the past, boards solely made up of experts have tended to concentrate on research and workplace matters. Considering veterinary science is largely a service-oriented industry, it is important that a person with a consumer background is appointed to the board to ensure the board's focus is always on improving service delivery. For farmers, good service from vets is the difference between a successful farming business or possible bankruptcy. And for some pet owners, their pets are more important than their relatives and therefore good veterinary service is vital for these people as well.

This amendment bill tidies up a number of old and redundant acts like the Dairy Adjustment Program Act 1976 and the Dairy Adjustment Program Agreement Act 1977. While talking about things redundant, the federal leader of the National Party, John Anderson, has been very successful in avoiding any extended debate on assistance to dairy farmers during the federal election campaign. The so-called farmer's friend, the National Party, should be using the opportunity of the federal election campaign to lobby their federal coalition colleagues, the Liberal Party, and in particular the Treasurer, Peter Costello, for more assistance for dairy farmers. Rather than spending \$150 million on wasteful self-promotional advertising, that money could be better spent to help dairy farmers to diversify.

As I travel around my electorate of Glass House, people in rural areas talk about the security of their lifestyle. We all saw quite dramatic changes to lifestyle following the deregulation of some of our primary industries. There is mounting pressure on families through the Howard government's mean and tricky GST and its general desertion of regional Queensland. My federal Labor candidate for Longman, Stephen Beckett, has been actively consulting with primary producers to look at their concerns and to work out solutions. Indeed, Stephen Beckett has been ensuring that primary producers and other rural people have had numerous opportunities to meet with the shadow spokesman for primary industries, Gavan O'Connor. Several public meetings and reviews have been conducted and direct communication with Kim Beazley's federal team means more meaningful policy direction for rural Queensland, and that is policy that is somehow generally lacking in the John Howard government.

This amendment bill demonstrates that our state Primary Industries Minister, Henry Palaszczuk, has his priorities right and is always willing to listen to farmers' concerns and to find solutions to help them through the difficulties they sometimes face. In light of all that, I commend the bill to the House.

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (5.13 p.m.), in reply: At the outset, I thank all honourable members who participated in the debate today. The debate was very constructive, and some issues were raised that need attention. The opposition's spokesperson raised a number of issues, and with justification. His main issue of concern related to the ownership of veterinarian practices, and that was the main concern of the member for Gregory and the member for Toowoomba South. I assure those honourable members that the government is very cognisant of the fact that there is concern in the community in relation to ownership of veterinary surgeries by persons other than veterinarians. This situation also currently applies to medical practices, because companies and non-practitioners own medical practices. Of course, as we all know, the only current exemption from this rule relates to the ownership of pharmacies.

For the benefit of honourable members opposite, the advantages of opening up the ownership of veterinary surgeries is to attract rural practitioners. We believe that there will be money available from the community to establish practices in rural Queensland which will then employ new graduates. The reason graduates cannot establish their own practices from the

outset is the high HECS debt they have to pay after they complete their university degree. Therefore, they cannot establish their own practice for many years. Opening up veterinary surgeries to the public will ensure that we can expand our veterinary establishments in country areas. The member for Gregory also focused on this issue. As a member who represents a country electorate, I can understand where he is coming from. However, I assure the honourable member that part of the government's thinking behind this amendment is to try to entice more vets into our country areas.

The member for Hinchinbrook also raised the issue of female veterinarians in country areas. I have some Queensland based vet statistics. Of Queensland based vets, there are currently 1,029 males, which is 64 per cent of the vet population, and 583 females, which constitutes around about 36 per cent. As far as all registered vets with Queensland boards are concerned, there are 1,247 males and 667 females, and that equates to about 35 per cent of females within the veterinary profession. Those opposite may be interested to know that in 1981 only 14.2 per cent of the registered vets in Queensland were females. Unfortunately, whilst this figure is still low, it is certainly higher than the number of women on rural boards and committees. This bill will assist the growth of the profession generally. This bill will also create a lot more opportunities for our female veterinarians.

The next issue I want to touch on relates to veterinarians being accorded the right to use 'Dr' in their title. As this legislation currently stands, the use of titles by veterinarians other than their veterinary qualifications is regarded as professional misconduct. Veterinarians registered in Queensland have been unable to legally use the title 'Dr' while their interstate colleagues—even those who obtained their qualifications in Queensland and who go interstate—can by right use the title 'Dr'. When they come back to Queensland, they have to revert back to 'Mr'. The standing of Queensland veterinarians has been consequently diminished in terms of interstate and international colleagues in terms of this prohibition. Veterinarians complete a five-year degree course. There is no sensible reason why Queensland trained graduates should not be able to receive equal recognition within their profession.

There are also potential overseas trade ramifications if the prohibition remains in place. Veterinarians are required to certify the health status of livestock and livestock products for trade movements. Certifications from veterinarians in other states, giving the appearance of superior ability by use of the title 'Dr', could see overseas trading partners prefer to deal with other states rather than Queensland because all of their veterinarians can use the title 'Dr' whilst those in Queensland cannot. I will be moving that amendment during the committee stage. I certainly hope that it will receive the support of honourable members opposite.

The opposition spokesperson also spoke about the Queensland Abattoir Corporation and its winding up, as did the members for Gladstone and Gregory. For the benefit of the House I will give the current status of Queensland Abattoir Corporation facilities. We know that there are five. I will go through them one at a time. The member for Logan waxed lyrical about the Cannon Hill abattoir and the great work that is being done by the Lee family, but I will go through them all one at a time.

In Toowoomba, the abattoir is closed and the site is now cleared. The site has been sold to Wagners, a gravel and building materials supplier, which has erected a concrete plant on the site. The Ipswich facility, which is commonly called Churchill, is now owned by Churchill Abattoirs Pty Ltd. It is owned by Millmerran pig, poultry and livestock producers Doug Hall and Sons. The site was given an EPA clearance prior to sale.

In Brisbane, the Cannon Hill abattoir, which is very dear to the heart of a certain member of this House, the member for Bulimba, is now owned by Australian Country Choice, which is the Coles supermarket supplier. Frigmobile Ltd has also built a cool storage facility on the site. There is still some remediation work and demolition of unused buildings required to be done by the administrator as part of the sale contract with ACC before an EPA clearance can be obtained.

The abattoir at Bundaberg is closed, the site is cleared and the land has been transferred from the Abattoir Corporation to the coordinator-general under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act for the development of a food park. This is being handled by the Department of State Development.

The Townsville facility is currently the topic of conversation amongst many members opposite and on this side of the House. There used to be two separate operations at Bohle, on a Crown reserve which is leased by the Department of Natural Resources under a trust arrangement to the QAC. One operation was the saleyards, which have been closed, and the site has been

remediated to EPA requirements. The future use of this part of the Bohle reserve is now a DNR&M responsibility. The other operation is an abattoir and rendering works, which has been subleased by the Queensland Abattoir Corporation to private sector operators. The subleases on these facilities and surrounding land run to October 2005.

The member for Gladstone did raise an issue in relation to governments exiting public ownership of facilities such as abattoir corporations. At the end of the day, sometimes governments have to make decisions. We as the Labor Party are pretty well committed to public facilities, but why should governments really be involved in the operation of abattoirs when out there in the community there are far better persons qualified to do that? We can certainly use the money we save there in other, more important areas, especially in my portfolio.

The issue of DPI jobs was raised by the member for Toowoomba South. I believe that he was misleading when he referred to DPI staff numbers. He referred to a number of jobs that he claimed had been cut from DPI. However, he fails to take into account that 300 or so jobs created to eradicate the papaya fruit fly were subsequently not required due to the success of the campaign. Also, the Leader of the Opposition does not take into consideration that 280 corporate services jobs were transferred from the Department of Primary Industries to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. The situation with the papaya fruit fly program—a successful program for which the 300 staff were no longer required—is the same as the situation with the fire ant program. We have put on close to 500 people for that program. At the end of a successful campaign to eradicate fire ants from Queensland, hopefully within the next five years, those staff will become redundant also.

The member for Gregory raised the issue of the meat inspector being removed from Longreach. The meat inspector he referred to was not from the MLAC. He was an employee of Safe Food Production Queensland. The Safe Food Production officer located in Longreach was positioned there on a temporary basis to assist the industry. This arrangement has been extended until Christmas. I am advised that Safe Food Production considers that it is more effective to service the region from Rockhampton.

I will go through some of the comments of other members. The member for Toowoomba North certainly raised some very important issues. I have taken on board many of his statements. He certainly has taken a very keen interest in primary industries and primary industries matters, especially issues that relate to his electorate and areas surrounding his electorate. I am always pleased and happy to have the member for Toowoomba North represent me at important functions.

As I said earlier, the honourable member for Logan waxed lyrical on a number of issues. Some did not relate to the amendments in the bill. When one considers the issues raised by the honourable member for Logan, one sees that he certainly has a passion for exporting Queensland products overseas. He has a passion for seeing not only that our boxed beef is exported overseas but also that our live cattle is exported to markets that cannot be serviced by our boxed beef market, which in turn will be converted to boxed beef markets. He referred particularly to Vietnam. Certainly there is a huge potential to increase our exports of live cattle to that country. Of the shipments that have gone there, the meat being presented in the supermarkets certainly attracted very high prices. That augurs well for our live cattle to be further exported to Vietnam.

The honourable member for Broadwater spoke at length and in very good detail on the amendments to the veterinary surgeries provisions and ownership of practices. She is working pretty closely with the Animal Welfare League in her own electorate. The Animal Welfare League was one group that actually lobbied me in relation to one of the amendments in the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill. I am quite sure that when the honourable member for Broadwater takes that information back to the league its members will be very pleased.

The honourable member for Gladstone raised a number of issues, one of which was the spraying of herbicides on, say, weeds out in the field. Once again, we really need to be sure that that chemical is sprayed in accordance with the label. The label then should also explain whether the chemical is harmful to animals. If we look at weeds and so on in the fields, we see that there are areas in which we do have large animals grazing as well.

Mr Rowell: This withholding provision gets over that issue.

Mr PALASZCZUK: That is right.

Mr Rowell: It might be 14 days or whatever, but there is a withholding provision to ensure that it does not come back.

Mr PALASZCZUK: That is right. I thank the honourable member.

The honourable member for Glass House was the last person to speak. Once again she spoke with great conviction, coming from a rural area—an area which certainly is involved in very important horticulture in Queensland—and many of the amendments to this bill are certainly in keeping with what is required in her electorate.

There is one more issue that I do want to raise—and this issue was raised by the Leader of the Opposition—in relation to exceptional circumstances. He also spoke at length about the deregulation of the dairy industry. I think that he and other members opposite have been sadly and badly misled by the federal Minister for Agriculture, Warren Truss. Unfortunately, he is peddling a great deal of untruths out there in the community, and I am very sad to say that the people who are suffering are the producers who are undergoing very severe drought conditions.

When exceptional circumstances were finally declared in a certain area of the Darling Downs—and I am responding to what the Leader of the Opposition said—the Department of Primary Industries supported the Agforce submission to the federal government. We provided backup information whenever it was requested. Then information came to the Department of Primary Industries that two additional part shires were also suffering the same conditions as the exceptional circumstances area. I wrote to the federal minister about three weeks ago. The Department of Primary Industries officers had been in consultation with federal agricultural officers on this issue. We found that there was absolutely no reason why exceptional circumstances provisions could not be extended to the new areas.

When NRAC contacted the Department of Primary Industries, we sent them all the relevant information. I think that was on about 6 October—well before the date that the election was called. Unfortunately, federal minister Warren Truss is hiding behind the provision that because an election has been called he cannot do a thing. Let me say this—and I want this on the record of this House: in 1998, during a caretaker period, an exceptional circumstances provision was agreed to by the then federal government—the then Howard government—and it was agreed to with the support of the federal opposition. We do have the support of the federal opposition in this case. I have spoken to Gavan O'Connor, and my officers have spoken to Gavan O'Connor, and he has given us that assurance. So Warren Truss should not hide behind the Caretaker Convention. There are farmers out there who are really suffering, and it is about time that he made a decision. And if he cannot make a decision he should get out of politics.

Mr Rowell: What about the independent droughted areas? Are you sure you're right up to speed with them—the independent droughted areas?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Is the member talking about the state area or the federal area?

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: We have local drought committees that make recommendations to the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr Rowell: They're loaded by DPI staff.

Mr PALASZCZUK: That is not the information that I have received.

Mr Rowell: We have letters that show this.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I will check.

Mr Rowell: The rural people who are on those independent drought committees are not getting a fair deal.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I will check.

I will now respond to the member for Gladstone's query about why there is not a deemed approval. A deemed approval may have adverse consequences for third parties. CPBs, or cane production boards, approve the cancellation or transfer of cane production areas. Often this cane production area is used on land subject to a mortgage. A deemed approval may deprive the mortgagee of rights without an opportunity for consultation. A deemed refusal enables a grower to appeal that refusal. This gives the grower the right to take the matter further without compromising the rights of others. This amendment has been introduced to the sugar act basically after consultation with growers throughout Queensland. They wanted this provision included, and this is the best way we thought that we could do it, by including that provision.

So with those few words, I thank once again all honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

Committee

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) in charge of the bill.

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (5.38 p.m.): The minister has already spoken about the possibility of animals ingesting food and being caught up in the food chain, and the problems with residuals. I acknowledge that. But I just want to confirm that what he is saying is that if a plant or herbicide is used on growth that has no hope of being ingested by anything, a farmer who is found to be still using a chemical on a product that is not listed on the label would be liable for prosecution.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The short answer is yes. However, the reason for the new section 8A is that it makes it clear that, subject to certain exceptions, a person must use a registered chemical product in the way stated in the instructions on the approval label for containers for the product.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: I want to clarify then how strident the intention is of the department to pursue this. I understand the intention is to stop the misuse of chemicals on products, particularly food products, where inadvertent harm could ensue to human health, including harm to humans because of beef, pork, or whatever, ingesting sprayed legumes, or whatever. That is a laudable reason. However, how harshly will the department pursue these people who use chemicals on growth that cannot be ingested by animals? In other words, is there going to be an intrusive inspection to ensure that this new legislation is adhered to when it will not have any effect on human health?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Basically, we are now bringing our legislation into line with the national legislation. That is the first step. When it comes to the Department of Primary Industries officers and their interpretation of the legislation, they still use some discretion when they work in with producers. I have seen them using that discretion before. I could go through a pretty ugly case in the Gayndah area that I became involved in and tried to assist, but I will not. I found that the Department of Primary Industries is not only able to use the necessary discretion but also a bit of commonsense.

Mr ROWELL: I would just like to raise an issue. When herbicides are sprayed—and I think this is the issue that the member for Gladstone raised—very often some of those herbicides are non-specific in their use. Is the minister pursuing that issue? Some of those herbicides have the ability to last for a long period. Is there any concern about the use of those types of herbicides in drains, or somewhere of that nature? Very often those types of herbicides are used in those places because of the vigorous growth of some vegetation and grasses. But very often the labels of those herbicides do not describe the type of plants that a person would be trying to destroy by using the herbicides.

I wanted to raise that issue because I think that it is quite important. There could also be some environmental issues involved with that as well. I have not seen anything on labels that relate to that issue, but I raise it with the minister.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The honourable member has raised an interesting point. Currently, the NRA—the National Registration Authority—does the labelling. We really need to ensure that we keep them up to speed. The issue that the member has raised is quite a legitimate and genuine issue and we can take it up at a later stage.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—

Mr ROWELL (5.43 p.m.): This clause deals with the off-label registration of chemicals. This is a particularly difficult issue for people growing fledgling crops throughout the state. Very often those people do not have a registered chemical that they can use. There are chemicals that are suitable, but they are not registered. In terms of the NRA, I know that there has been some off-labelling going on for minor use. In some cases temporary permits are given. The problem that we face is that very often these chemicals are needed so badly that it takes a considerable length of time before people get an off-label usage for that type of chemical. Sometimes the situation arises that one chemical has a very broad spectrum. Although it might not be used specifically for what the label says it is to be used for, it is still used. Is there any likelihood that people will be prosecuted for that reason?

Mr PALASZCZUK: Quite obviously, if the application contravenes the label, then, of course, that person could be subject to prosecution. But as I said previously when speaking to clause 5, the DPI officers will use commonsense and discretion on that issue.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: As I have said, the National Registration Authority, which is a Commonwealth body, is responsible for the registration of chemical products and prescribing their acceptable use. Each state has the responsibility for ensuring that these chemical products are used safely and in accordance with the NRA's use requirements. These amendments do nothing more than ensure that a person must use a chemical product in accordance with the NRA's determination of acceptable use. In other words, a person must use a chemical product in the way specified on the label. That is the intent of the current legislation and this continues also in these amendments.

Mr ROWELL: The whole issue is that we are tightening up on what we were doing previously. All I am saying is that one chemical can be used to control a couple of pests, one of which will be registered for use but the other may not. Is there any likelihood that people are going to be penalised as a result of that?

There is another very important issue. When imports come into Australia, for example, pineapples or bananas from the Philippines, how do we know whether those imports contain chemicals that we have not registered? The situation could arise that chemicals that are used in the Philippines are not registered in Australia. There was a situation that occurred with Applaud. I do not know whether the minister is familiar with that situation, but I was involved in it at the early stage, and it was difficult.

Mr Palaszczuk: I copped it after you.

Mr ROWELL: That is good, but I helped the minister out, so it does not matter. The point I am making is that that was a classic example of a chemical being used on a New Zealand product that could not be used in Australia. Subsequently, the chemical was registered, but the point was that, at the time it was used, the chemical was not registered in Australia. New Zealanders could export products to Australia that contained Applaud, but we could not use that chemical in Australia. How do we get around that issue? I have spoken to some extent to the ANZFA people about it, and I am not convinced that they have an answer.

Mr PALASZCZUK: In relation to the first issue that the honourable member raised, basically this amendment clarifies the intent of the legislation. In relation to the issue of imports coming into Australia, although I am very interested in what happens, I think that we all know that that is a federal government issue under the control of AQIS.

Mr Rowell: It comes under ANZFA. It does not come under biosecurity.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Biosecurity?

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: At the end of the day, that is where the issue will rest. But, being on the ministerial council, we certainly take cognisance of what is happening.

Mr Rowell: All I can say is that we should not be overpedantic on this issue.

Mr PALASZCZUK: We are not trying to be over pedantic. Basically, we are trying to get our legislation in line with the federal legislation. For all intents and purposes, we are clarifying the intent. As I said earlier, there is no change from the current legislation.

Mr ROWELL: Out in the real world, things change. It is very difficult to adhere chapter and verse to exactly what legislation says. While I am supportive of the intent of the legislation, I am a little concerned because very often our competitiveness is impeded by the fact that we do not have access to certain chemicals that other countries use—countries that import into Australia and also compete against us on world markets. We do not have the ability to use those chemicals and they do.

It is interesting to raise this issue at ministerial councils, because it is all about our ability to compete against imports or to compete in the export arena. I do not want to see Queensland producers locked in so tightly. Somebody may be doing something that could be demonstrated to be wrong. For example, they may be using an insecticide on two types of insects, although the chemical might have a label control for only one of the insects. It will still be used on both insects, and that can happen from time to time. That is what happens in the real world.

Mrs PRATT: At this point, I would like to declare an interest in the chemical issue, as my husband is an aerial sprayer. In our experience, there have been occurrences where a chemical has not actually been registered for a particular crop or a particular method of application. The instance that I was thinking of involved Schlerotinia in peanuts. It is a fungal disease that can destroy a crop within a matter of hours or days. It spreads like wildlife. Often, one does not have time to get the documentation to say that a chemical could be used on that crop. If a chemical, although not applicable to a particular crop according to the label, was used or applied in a certain manner, would the people who used it or the farmers be penalised?

Mr PALASZCZUK: At the end of the day, we are bound by the NRA's instructions on the label. It is as simple as that. We are bound by those instructions.

Mrs PRATT: So basically a whole crop could be wiped out and there would be no course but to charge those people? Is the minister saying that they would be charged, even if they were saving their crops?

Mr PALASZCZUK: What has happened in the past?

Mrs PRATT: In the past it was basically at the discretion of the DPI or whomever. People were given a direction by the DPI that it felt that the crop was being affected and perhaps this was the only method of application and/or spraying, and that advice was accepted.

Mr PALASZCZUK: That should not happen. We are dealing with chemicals. As I said earlier, personally I find that pretty hard to believe. If the honourable member says that it has happened and DPI officers have used discretion, I certainly hope that they have used discretion in the right manner.

At the end of the day, we are still bound by what the NRA says on the labels. We are bound by it federally. This legislation brings us in line with other legislation and with what the federal legislation is all about.

Mrs PRATT: Minister, what assistance would the DPI give in hurrying through any sort of registration in such a circumstance? If something like this was found, what assistance would the DPI give to hurry up the system?

Mr PALASZCZUK: That has happened already on a number of occasions where the Department of Primary Industries has been in contact with its federal counterparts and the NRA for emergency declarations and emergency registrations. The latest case that is pretty close to my heart is the registration of Andro for use against fire ants. We can speed up the process, but we have to go through the right channels. That is what the DPI is there for. The DPI is there to assist our growers, because at the end of the day, unless we have a clean ethically produced product, we will not be able to sell it.

Mrs PRATT: Could I deduce from that that if the DPI—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Liddy Clark): Order! The member does not have any more time.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 53, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr PALASZCZUK (5.57 p.m.): I move amendment No. 1—

1. After clause 53—

At page 31, after line 13—

insert—

' 53A Insertion of new s 24A

Part 4, after section 24—

insert—

' 24A Use of title 'doctor'

'(1) This section applies to a person who is a veterinary surgeon using the title of doctor.

'(2) The person does not commit an offence against the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993, section 8(3),¹ so far as that subsection applies to the higher education award of the title of doctor, if the person uses the title followed by—

(a) the person's name; and

(b) words, or an abbreviation of words, intended to indicate, and could be reasonably understood to indicate, that the person is a veterinary surgeon.

'(3) In this section—

"title" includes description and status.'.

¹ Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993, section 8 (Limitation on conferring or using certain awards)

The government moves an amendment to insert new clause 53A in the bill which, together with clause 51 of the bill, removes a provision in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 that does not allow a Queensland registered veterinary surgeon to use an honorific title. New clause 53A inserts section 24A into the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936, which will allow a registered veterinary surgeon to use the honorific title of Dr. The provision achieves this by removing the operation of the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993 that would prohibit such use of the title. At the time of the introduction of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill, consultation on the proposed amendments to avoid conflict with the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 1993 was not yet finalised.

I am pleased to recommend this amendment to the House following further consultation between the Department of Primary Industries and Education Queensland, and between Education Queensland and the nine Queensland universities. I give a special vote of thanks to Professor John Hay from the Queensland University for his support.

The Veterinary Surgeons Board and the Australian Veterinary Association, Queensland Division, strongly support the concept of allowing veterinarians to use the honorary title 'doctor', as this is allowed in every other state and is also common practice overseas, especially in the United States, Canada and Great Britain. The Veterinary Surgeons Board's records indicate that veterinarians in Queensland have been seeking this for the past 25 years. I am quite sure that this amendment will be warmly welcomed by the veterinary profession and also the animals that they look after.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 54—

Mr ROWELL (6.00 p.m.): I raised concern about the issue of a non-veterinarian owning a service. A few of us have raised this issue. Under national competition policy it is considered that it is not competitive for only veterinary surgeons to be able to own a veterinary surgery. That is the essence of what we are talking about. Although the minister has said that this might assist young people to go out into country areas, I can assure the minister that, if the business is not lucrative, that type of facility will not be established out there. There are the costs of setting up and renting or buying premises. Then somebody would have to be employed to provide the service. This aspect of national competition policy concerns me.

For example, in areas such as health, major hospitals are operated by non-medical people. However, very often in country areas of Queensland veterinary surgeries are one-person operations. I have doubts about whether people outside the profession will go out into the country and provide all of the facilities that a veterinary surgeon needs to conduct that type of service.

I am not sure that we are losing numbers. We have a cattle and a general meat industry for birds, goats, sheep and so on. Those industries are gradually increasing in value. We now face threats posed by BSE, foot-and-mouth disease and so on. It is extremely important that we get people out into the rural areas where the animal industries are of a significant size.

I do not think this amendment will do a lot of good as far as establishing veterinary practices in country areas. Whilst it might be necessary to do this to comply with national competition policy, I do not think this is a good move or in the interests of veterinarians providing service to the animal industries of regional Queensland. I would like to hear the minister's comments. I heard him comment on this during his reply to the second reading debate. I honestly believe this is a step in the wrong direction. We need to ensure that veterinarians have the opportunity to go out into country areas and start their own businesses. However, I doubt whether what we are doing will be a significant step to facilitate that. This new amendment to the bill is being implemented only because of national competition policy.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I beg to differ with the honourable member in relation to the issue of ownership of veterinary surgeries by non-veterinarians. I am still of the opinion and I am convinced—this was especially so in the drafting stages of this bill and in the discussions that I have had with the relevant persons—that the removal of those ownership restrictions will lead to a growth of veterinary professionals in Queensland. It will afford the wives or the husbands of veterinary surgeons the right to buy into the surgery. It will give the nurses who work in those surgeries the right to buy into the surgeries. It will give businesspeople in those smaller country

centres who do have the money the incentive to open a veterinary surgery in their town. For example, the sister of a pharmacist friend of mine is a veterinarian living near Augathella on a property with her husband. I am quite sure that if a veterinary surgery were opened either there or in Charleville she would be more than prepared to work as a veterinarian there, and that would provide a brand-new service for the people who live in that local area.

As I said previously, veterinarians coming out of university, given the very high HECS they have to pay, find it very difficult to raise the necessary capital to establish a surgery. It is good to see, under this provision, that other people will be able to open a surgery to employ these young veterinarians. Sure there might be some surgeries that will become quite large, as has occurred within the medical profession. But at the end of the day what is behind this thinking is basically to grow the number of vets in Queensland but, more importantly, to grow them so that they can work in country areas. We have also put in some provisions to ensure that these veterinary surgeries will be operated no differently from those operated by veterinary surgeons.

Mr Rowell interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: They have to comply with everything, as the member said. There is no need for me to go through that again. I beg to differ with the honourable member; I believe this provision will grow vet numbers in Queensland. It will grow veterinary surgeries in rural and regional Queensland. The amendment I moved previously will increase the status of veterinarians in Queensland, because now they will be able to call themselves doctors.

Mr ROWELL: There is just one other aspect. Businesses are profit motivated; people are trying to make money. We need to ensure that the quality of service is not reduced. The risk where we have with this type of situation is that whoever is providing the finance to start up and run a practice might take some shortcuts. For example, doctors in country areas are often called out after hours. If an employee has to be paid overtime and so on, there will be some reluctance on the part of the proprietors of that institution to provide the finances to do the after hours services that certain owner-operator practices provide.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Any lay person wishing to open a veterinary practice has to go through the Veterinary Surgeons Board. It has to be approved by the board in the first place. That is the most important thing. Then they have to comply with the rigid conditions that normal veterinary surgeries have to comply with as well. Although the honourable member is expressing concern, I think the concern is ill-founded.

Clause 54, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 55 to 58, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

Third Reading

Bill, on motion of Mr Palaszcuk, by leave, read a third time.

ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 31 July (see p. 1990).

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (6.10 p.m.): The National Party opposition will be supporting the Animal Care and Protection Bill 2001. In fact, I think it is fair to say that it is pretty much the National Party bill that was put together prior to us leaving government. Of course, it has taken some time for it to be presented to parliament. The primary objective of the bill is to repeal the current and antiquated animal cruelty legislation, the Animal Protection Act 1925, and to replace it with contemporary and proactive legislation that promotes the responsible care and use of animals and helps to protect animals from acts of cruelty.

The bill will provide standards that benchmark what is acceptable in the care and use of animals in particular circumstances, for example, in livestock production. In providing such standards the bill aims to achieve a reasonable balance between the welfare needs of animals and the interests of people who use animals for a livelihood. I think that is quite important. We were talking during the debate on the previous bill about the value of animal industries in Queensland. They are probably worth over \$2 billion currently. When we talk about animal

welfare, I think it is extremely important that we recognise that the use of animals as a food and certainly the way people conduct themselves in relation to horses, dogs, et cetera are part of the livelihood of a lot of people in Queensland and contribute to our state economy.

The bill will also reflect contemporary community attitudes and expectations as to how animals should be treated—a very important issue. We change. There is an evolution going on that we have to be kinder to animals; we have to treat them with greater respect. That is a fact of life nowadays. If we looked back to the 1920s when the current bill was brought into being, we would see that life was pretty difficult. We used animals as a beast of burden. We used them in bullock wagons and we used them for ploughing fields and all that sort of thing. I suppose they led a fairly hard life, as did people back in those days. We did not have the refinements. As we move on we reach a point at which we recognise that life can be easy for everybody.

As I said, I believe this legislation is pretty much the same as the legislation that the National Party was working on prior to leaving government. The bill also acknowledges advances in the scientific knowledge of animal biology and behaviour. That is quite important. It is because we have a far better understanding of animals through medical science—whether that is for the betterment of human beings or animals—that we are able to treat them better. They will have a longer life. They will certainly have the capacity to recover from ills and ails, which in the old days was probably not the case. Further, as all members would be aware, the bill seeks to specifically regulate the use of animals for scientific purposes to ensure that the use of animals for those purposes is accounted for openly, ethically and responsibly.

As the minister noted appropriately in his second reading speech, this bill deals with today's animal welfare issues in an innovative way. I think I have gone through that. There have been changes, and we are trying to deal with animals differently from the way we dealt with them back in 1925. The minister refers to the major advances that have taken place in our knowledge and understanding of animal biology and behaviour, together with the increasing community demand that is placed on animals in agriculture, science, sport, recreation and entertainment, and as a companion. It is critical that the new legislation reflects this, unlike the attitudes of the model drafted back in 1925.

I have spent a little bit of time on this. We are seeing major changes in our ability to understand how animals are hurt, how we can deal with disease, et cetera. Back in 1925 some very rigorous remedies were used to treat animals. That has changed substantially in line with our increasing scientific knowledge of animals and human life in general.

The minister has noted the particular deficiencies in the existing act. I believe it is important to again raise these for the benefit of all members of the House. The current act adopted a mainly reactive approach to animal welfare issues by dealing only with punishing acts of cruelty to animals after they had occurred. Of course, the act had to occur before anything was done about it. We were not being proactive about the way we dealt with animals. If somebody was cruel to an animal, it was a reactive situation rather than a proactive situation, when certain things could be done prior to the occurrence of an event that would be inhumane towards animals. It does little to promote improvements. It does little to promote animal welfare standards in Queensland and effectively exempts major areas of animal use, such as the use of animals in livestock production, from the operation of the act.

The current act is not written in plain English and, therefore, it is not easily accessible to the wider community. It also predates fundamental legislative principles and, in particular, contains enforcement powers without necessary safeguards, which the community now regards as inappropriate. There are insufficient accountability mechanisms for certain classes of officers exercising enforcement powers under that act. Back in those days I think we had a mechanism coming from that legislation whereby enforcement was carried out by people who did not really understand what was needed in terms of the best interests of the animal. Very often there were cases—and we have seen cases over a period—in which officers did not act in the best interests of animals.

Of course, the penalty levels for offences under that act have not kept pace with other offences of a similar character and, therefore, offer little deterrent value. These changes have occurred. I think that is the reason why this act has now been brought into the parliament. As I have stated, the National Party opposition will be supporting the bill. It is long overdue.

When we were in government we certainly considered the matter. It had been talked about for some time. I believe that the animal care legislation that has been presented to this parliament is pretty much line ball with the intention of the National Party led coalition at the time

that we left government. It would have been only a matter of time before we would have implemented such legislation.

The opposition strongly recognises and supports the need for imposing increased responsibility and penalties if a person fails to carry out their duty of care while in possession of an animal. For the benefit of members of the House who have only recently been elected to the parliament, it is worth mentioning that the basis of this bill was largely drafted by the National Party. I have reiterated that a few times because I think it is important. I think the minister would acknowledge that a lot of work had been done prior to those opposite getting into government. We had been through this issue when we were in government and the issue had been well advanced. Under Premier Goss, the previous Labor government managed to squander \$1 million reviewing the act. It managed to reach draft No. 41 or 42 but never managed to bring the legislation into parliament after five years of wasting taxpayers' money. The introduction of this bill is certainly one of the achievements that the National Party would have liked to have been involved in, but as time goes on and things change in the political arena we did not get the opportunity.

Before I comment on the principal clauses within the bill, I have to say that this legislation and any future amendments to it must continue to be based on long-term issues which have caused problems over time and be issues recognised by peak bodies and organisations relevant to animal welfare, such as the RSPCA, the Queensland Farmers Federation and Agforce. Those organisations are the major bodies directly involved with animals and animal welfare. By this I mean that it is important that this type of legislation does not solely reflect a reaction to one particular incident within animal welfare that has received community outcry. If that happens, there is a danger of introducing laws that may be harmful to a particular community group. The animal industry is worth billions of dollars to Queensland. We have to ensure that the aspirations of one group are not overshadowed by another. We also need to recognise that animals are a very worthy industry to Queensland and we need to respect them so that they can lead a respectable existence. In turn, that will not reflect poorly on those people who have to deal with them on a day-to-day basis.

Section 13 of chapter 2 of the bill refers to the adoption of codes of practices for the welfare of animals in a number of different situations, and they have been detailed in this section of the bill. The opposition acknowledges that the government has developed these codes through community and industry consultation and that they will make the community aware of the seriousness of animal welfare issues. In achieving this, an education process will be very important. We acknowledge the government's assistance to the RSPCA in the form of \$90,000 to educate and train people through a mobile education unit that will tour the state. That is quite important, because that education unit can be taken to schools and areas where there are sensitive issues in relation to animals. It can inform people generally as to how we can treat animals better. That is certainly a good initiative.

However, local and rural based SPCAs that provide care and refuge for unwanted animals receive very little funding and it is doubtful if grants for these refuges would be continued in the future. I have raised this issue with the minister, but I raise it again. The opposition welcomes the Beattie government's backflip on funding SPCAs. However, it is an unsatisfactory situation that societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, SPCAs, have received financial grants of \$2,000 and less. Without future funding, they will not be able to sustain the resources necessary to keep the refuges open. Given the intention of the bill, it is important that smaller animal refuges are provided with the required advice and funding in order to meet the legislative changes. I would strongly recommend that if the RSPCA is to receive \$90,000 for education surely additional funding can be provided for those small organisations that care for unwanted animals.

I wrote to the minister about this issue. Six or seven of these refuges had a big shadow over them. I have to concede that the minister turned the whole thing around, because it was small amounts of money such as \$100, \$200, \$300 or \$2,000 and \$3,000 which kept those organisations going. My secretary worked for one of these SPCAs by volunteering on weekends and did jobs like cutting the grass. Many unwanted animals were brought in. Sometimes they needed care and attention. Even though they received funding of a couple thousand dollars, which was a very meagre amount, these refuges need to be recognised and given an even greater amount of financial support. Funding is provided to the RSPCA in the bigger centres, but it is barely recognised in rural Queensland. In many of these little places people work on a volunteer basis. There is no reward for what they do other than a love for animals. They feed them and get them back into a reasonable state. Sometimes they sell them. Sometimes they

have to be put down. They have to look after all kinds of animals—dogs, cats, horses, you name it. They do an excellent job. They are a very dedicated band of people.

When the SPCA at Herbert River at Halifax was aware that it was going to get \$2,000 again, the people who work there were absolutely elated. They thought it was great. However, some of those facilities should receive funding of \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000. It would be greatly appreciated, because they work on a shoestring. It is difficult to raise funding from raffles in pubs. It is not like it used to be. There are poker machines to compete against. As a result, these organisations do not have the same ability to raise funds. I ask the minister to take that on board, because it is important that we foster these groups and keep them going.

I turn now to part 2 of the act, Purposes and Application of the Act. Clause 8 states—

This Act does not apply to or affect an act done, or omission made, by—

- (a) an Aborigine under Aboriginal tradition; or
- (b) a Torres Strait Islander under Island custom.

While this bill recognises the custom of these people, do the traditions of Aboriginals and Islanders have to comply with the code of practice, which is one, if not the, major purposes of this legislation? While we recognise that Aboriginal people have killed animals in a certain way, is there any reason why they should be different to anybody else when dealing with the humane aspects of looking after animals? The customs of the day which existed when the old act was drafted in 1925, the act which this bill repeals, may be regarded as draconian today but were probably not regarded that way in those days. We may need to look at groups such as Aboriginal and Islander people in relation to the code of practice to ensure that we are on a level playing field. No matter what the race and the customs followed by a group 20, 30, 1,000 or 60,000 years ago, they should still have to comply with the requirements of the act. It is important that the code of practice is consistent and that such a tradition is not detrimental to the wellbeing of an animal species.

The opposition broadly supports the strengthening of penalties for a breach of duty of care in this proposed bill as outlined in chapter 3, General Animal Offences. It is critical that we support subsection 4(b) in deciding what is appropriate. Regard had to be given to bushfires and other natural disasters, floods or other climatic conditions. In this situation, a farmer or landowner may have done his or her best but their actions were still to the detriment of the animals involved.

This is a very important issue. We talk about drought, and the minister referred earlier to exceptional circumstances. I think we have to recognise that we can provide at least some form of subsistence diet for starving animals. It is not always possible to do that because of the magnitude of droughts, the logistics of getting food and the cost compared with the return, but I think we have to do everything possible in order to treat animals humanely. Also, once people start losing breeding stock it takes them a long time to get back to a point whereby they can recover debt and so on.

This situation does not apply just to drought. It applies to floods also. In my part of the world I have seen creeks come up very quickly. The graziers will do everything they possibly can to ensure that fences are constructed so that they rise and fall with floods and so that there is a capacity for animals to get away from the flooded areas. I have seen some terrible things happen, whether as a result of fire, flood or drought, whereby animals have had a pretty difficult time and/or a very difficult death. It is one of those things we have to deal with. Wherever we can assist in this area, it is important that we do so.

Subparagraph (d) of clause 18 refers to the maximum penalty units of 1,000, or two years imprisonment, for overriding or overworking an animal. Animals are not worked as they used to be, but I suppose there are situations whereby people still ride horses and dogs are taken out. Generally, the people who do that type of work look after their animals in a very humane way. It is probably not always recognised by people who are not conversant with rural practices that owners are very mindful of doing the best they can for their animals. I would not like to see exorbitant penalties imposed on people who are doing the right thing when another group considers that they are not. Determining this action could be very subjective. Therefore, it is important for the minister to explain in full detail how this action will be judged. How will it be decided that an animal is not being treated correctly?

Rodeos are not listed as prohibited events, as noted in paragraph (2) of clause 20. The opposition supports this exclusion. However, it is important to inform animal welfare groups—I trust that this will be done as part of the education process for this bill—that this is listed as a form of entertainment and not as an act of cruelty or intimidation of the animal. Animals are

conditioned in a similar way to sportspeople. While rodeo events might look pretty rough and tough, there is a capacity for that to continue. It has been recognised in the bill, and we do not want to see sporting activities involving animals banned. As I said, conditioned animals are probably like footballers. They would be able to handle the rough and tumble aspects of rodeos without any detrimental effect.

In relation to de-barking, the cropping of ears and the docking of tails of dogs, veterinary surgeons have significant discretion as to whether those procedures are considered to be in the interests of the dog or whether they have been provided with the relevant nuisance abatement notice. It is critical that people in this professional position are well informed of the decision they are making and that the enforceable penalty can be applied if the proper permission, from either the owners or the department, has not been granted. Further, it is critical that a group such as Animal Liberation has been consulted with regard to this paragraph. Otherwise this and other animal welfare groups may challenge those sorts of decisions.

With regard to what is prohibited and regulated contact, referred to in clause 37, it should be further recognised that, even with reasonable steps being taken to prevent the injuring and killing of a second animal which is deemed to be vulnerable, such incidents can still happen, despite the good intention of the animal owner. Therefore, prosecuting this form of action is determined by a person's subjective view. I think it is most important to again highlight that the full extent of the circumstances must be acknowledged before any form of judgment against the farmer or owner is made.

I refer to pig hunting. Dogs are very valuable in tracking down, holding and retaining pigs. The dogs are trained to do this sort of work and they are very valuable. I raise the issue of one animal getting involved with a second animal to ensure that we can use that as a method of disposing of unwanted vermin. Right throughout Queensland pigs could be a major problem, particularly if foot-and-mouth disease gets into the top end of the cape where it could travel all the way down through Queensland. In the world heritage area the pig problem is extreme. It is necessary to control pigs because they have a very damaging effect on the sugar industry.

The baiting of rats in cane fields with rodenticides is a significant issue for the sugar industry. The use of zinc phosphide has proven to be very effective. Once we used Klerat, which had some problems associated with it. It had a very strong residual effect. When predators such as hawks and owls came down to feed they were often killed as a result of contaminated prey. Now, rural industries use smart technology. They can use a rodenticide that will not have any residual effect. The hawks can still come down to feed and not be affected by the use of any rodenticide. Many canegrowers have owl boxes in order to encourage these predators to live close to the cane fields and keep the rat population at a manageable level. I believe that baiting programs can be carried out in a responsible manner under clause 36 of this legislation.

As the minister stated quite rightly in his second reading speech, a major focus of the bill is the control of the use of animals for scientific purposes. Clause 49 refers to the scientific use code and the most recent revision of the Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Given that the proposed legislation will be replacing an act formed in 1925, it is important that the code be up to date with modern practices. It would be useful if the minister could provide the publication date of the most recent addition and tell the House whether it will be further amended following debate of the current bill in the parliament. What movement will there be in the codes of practice after this debate? Does the minister have the codes of practice signed, sealed and delivered?

Mr Palaszcuk interjected.

Mr ROWELL: That is the point I am making. What stage are we at with it?

Mr Palaszcuk interjected.

Mr ROWELL: That is fine. The opposition also views paragraph 2, which requires the chief executive officer to keep a copy of the code available for inspection by the public, as a means of ensuring that the public has full access to the code and any changes that may be introduced from time to time.

The registration of scientific uses outlined in clause 51 of the bill details what the person must satisfy, and subparagraph (b) states—

an individual retained by a registered person acting in the course of the individual's retainer;

The definition of 'retained' means employed or engaged, whether or not for remuneration. For the benefit of the opposition and other members of the House, it would be beneficial if the minister

could clarify whether this section also applies to someone undertaking work experience at a research institute.

Most importantly in discussing this section of the bill, it is imperative that a person complies with the conditions listed in the code and detailed under clause 91 of the bill, which state—

- (a) the use is approved by an animal ethics committee whose registered terms of reference include monitoring the use; and
- (b) any requirements of the committee made under the scientific use code in relation to the use have been complied with; and
- (c) the provisions of the code, to the extent they are relevant to the use, have been complied with.

One of the final and most important sections of the bill refers to the monitoring programs and the stock inspectors who will have the responsibility of enforcing the bill. It is the understanding of the opposition that administering and implementing the bill will cost a recurring \$1.6 million, yet I cannot recall seeing these costs provided for in the 2001-2002 state budget for the Department of Primary Industries. For the benefit of the House, it would be valuable if the minister could provide an explanation of the costs of the legislation and whether this was noted in the recent budget and out of which program this will come.

The RSPCA has played a major role in the enforcement of animal welfare. However, RSPCA inspectors do not have the same accountability to the minister nor to parliament, and for these reasons the opposition acknowledges that this bill will institute accountability requirements and mechanisms for non-government inspectors.

As the class of persons who may be appointed as inspectors has been broadened to increase the ability to address animal welfare issues throughout the state, including the eligibility of veterinarians and stock inspectors who are employees within the DPI, a person will be required to have relevant training or expertise to carry out those duties. That is as I understand it. The minister mentioned in his second reading speech the training standards which will have to be met, and it is imperative that they are thorough and provide clear guidance, in particular to people who may be appointed from other areas of the industry with minimal expertise in administering animal welfare legislation.

Clause 116 of the bill will seek to add greater accountability measures. As stated in the bill, to ensure inspectors are accountable for the exercise of their statutory powers the instrument of appointment by the chief executive, a regulation or notice, may require the inspector to provide reports about the performance of the inspectors' functions or the exercise of the inspectors' powers. To ensure an inspector is easily identified, the issuing of an identity card is viewed by the opposition as necessary and critical for preventing a person imitating someone in this position of power as outlined through clause 119 of the bill.

A further feature of the bill is contained in clause 123, the limited entry power to provide relief to an animal. As noted, this will provide inspectors with limited powers to provide relief to an animal at a place, other than a vehicle or part of the place at which a person resides or apparently resides. We support this amendment, which will allow an inspector to enter if they reasonably suspect that the animal is suffering from a lack of food or water or is entangled. However, it is most important that, in doing so, the proper action is taken by the inspector which will make the owner/farmer aware of what has taken place and why it was necessary. Otherwise, this clause has the potential to be misused and could result in the owner of a farm or a person's backyard feeling that their privacy and property have been wrongfully invaded and without a justified reason. With regard to administering this legislation, the opposition also seeks clarification of what body will be responsible for the sale of unwanted animals and the animals of a convicted person involved in a disposal order.

The introduction of this legislation has been long awaited, and we in the opposition support the necessity to update and modernise the previous Animal Protection Act and ensure that acts of animal cruelty receive justified penalties. However, in doing so it is imperative that the Beattie government continues to respect the landowners, farmers and various other organisations to whom this legislation will make a significant change, in particular to the increased powers of inspectors and their rights to intervene for the welfare of an animal.

Continued consultation and the provision of funding for education will assist in the community's broader understanding of animal welfare issues, including the need for the minister to ensure SPCAs remain viable as animal refuges. The opposition also welcomes the minister's initiative to establish an Animal Welfare Advisory Committee which will, hopefully, ensure that the act remains current to animal welfare issues.

Is this legislation consistent with that in other states? This is an important issue. When we see trade coming across the borders, and when we see animals being moved from one point to the other, we do not want to see consignments coming from interstate without deciding who is responsible for the condition of the animal—whether it is the person who is actually sending it, whether it is the person who is operating the transport system, or whoever it might be.

There are a number of issues that I have raised, and I would be pleased if the minister were to respond to those issues in his reply.

Debate, on motion of Mr Livingstone, adjourned.

PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (6.46 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That leave be granted to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Prostitution Act 1999, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

Bill and explanatory notes presented and bill, on motion of Mr McGrady, read a first time.

Second Reading

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (6.47 p.m.): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

In 1999 the Beattie Labor government put in place a framework for the regulation of prostitution in Queensland through the enactment of the Prostitution Act 1999. The act was the culmination of many years of government work. The framework balanced the interests of strict regulation with the need to address the social factors that arise from prostitution, namely, the health and safety issues surrounding the industry. To achieve this, the act restricts legal prostitution to small licensed brothels and individual sex workers. Prostitution services provided in any other manner, including street soliciting, escort agencies, massage parlours and unlicensed brothels are prohibited.

The restrictions on licensing brothels are tough. This government makes no apology for that. The government believes that the operation of brothels should not be an intrusion into the day-to-day lives of members of the community who do not want to be exposed to the nuisance of brothel activity or, indeed, advertising.

The government is also mindful of the attraction of criminal elements to the prostitution industry. Since the act commenced in 2000, significant progress has been made in achieving the act's objective of regulating prostitution in Queensland. The government has struck hard at the illegal prostitution industry that falls foul of the act. The Prostitution Enforcement Task Force of the Queensland Police Service has informed me that since 1 July 2000, 63 illegal brothels were closed down and 375 charges for prostitution-related offences commenced against 202 people. And recently, the first licensed brothel in Queensland commenced operation. The objective of this bill is to continue the progress that has been made to date by improving the planning approval processes for brothels and clarifying some of the concepts and procedures that underpin the achievement of the act's objective.

Before a licensed brothel can commence operations, a brothel operator must obtain planning approval from local government and a brothel licence from the Prostitution Licensing Authority. Planning approvals for brothels are determined by local governments. Applications relating to industrial areas are assessed against the criteria contained in the planning code. These applications are known as code assessable applications. In other areas where brothels may be permitted, public notification is required, alerting potential objectors to the proposal. These applications are referred to as impact assessable. The determination of whether an application for planning approval is impact assessable or code assessable depends primarily upon whether the proposed brothel site is in an industrial area.

The lack of a definition of 'industrial area' has led to interpretations of the term that are not consistent with the objective of the act. To overcome this situation, the bill proposes to define this important term. The proposed definition of 'industrial area' refers to both its designation in a local government plan or the predominant use of land in the area. The definition also makes this clear by use of examples that an industrial area is not limited to an area where there is heavy industry but also includes other types such as light and commercial industries. Under the act, local governments must refuse planning approvals for brothels that are within 200 metres of residential areas, people's homes or places like schools, hospitals, kindergartens or other places frequented by children. However, the act does not currently specify how the distance of 200 metres should be measured.

This bill overcomes this problem through a commonsense approach that requires the distance of 200 metres to be measured according to the shortest lawful route that a person may take by vehicle or foot. The bill also includes an additional distance requirement that a potential brothel site must not be closer than 100 metres to any of the above places measured in a straight line. This actually strengthens the legislation to protect communities.

A final improvement to the arrangements in the act for planning approvals is the establishment of an independent assessor. Presently, all appeals against planning decisions about brothels by local governments go to the Planning and Environment Court. In view of the increasing demands being placed on the Planning and Environment Court, its resources are better directed towards dealing with more complex development issues. To this end, a new position to be known as the Independent Assessor has been created to determine all appeals relating to decisions on the simpler code assessable development applications for brothels, that is, applications for the development of a site in an industrial area.

The Planning and Environment Court will retain its jurisdiction over appeals about applications that are impact assessable, such as application for development of a site in a residential area. Any person who has lodged an objection to an impact assessable application retains their existing right of appeal to the Planning and Environment Court.

The Independent Assessor will be a lawyer of at least five years standing with relevant expertise in planning and development matters. Similar to a judge, the Independent Assessor will not be subject to the direction of any person in the performance of his or her functions. In order to ensure the efficient and effective adjudication of these appeals, the Independent Assessor will be subject to decision-making time frames and have the ability, where appropriate, to decide matters solely on the basis of written submissions instead of a full hearing.

In addition to improving the provisions relating to planning approvals, the bill also addresses some procedural and administrative issues that have emerged in the first 18 months of the act's operation. The act does not presently make explicit the order in which planning approvals and brothel licence applications should be considered. As a consequence, the authority and the Queensland Police Service have been required to commit resources to inquiries into a person's suitability to hold a brothel licence prior to the parallel application for a planning approval being determined.

In situations where planning approval was refused, the inquiries conducted proved unnecessary. To remedy this situation, the bill will amend the act to provide that the Prostitution Licensing Authority is not obliged to consider an application until development approval is granted.

Section 65 and section 66 of the act enable the Magistrate's Court to make orders declaring premises prohibited brothels. An unintended consequence of the current wording of these sections is that a court may only declare premises prohibited brothels if the court is satisfied a person is operating a brothel without a licence on the premises on the date of the hearing, not the date of the making of the application. The effect of this interpretation is that an applicant must present evidence to the court on the day of the hearing that proves that the brothel is operational on that same day. This is problematic, because the evidence of an illegal brothel operating from premises is obtained through investigative and enforcement action conducted prior to the application for the declaration being made, such as a raid on the premises.

The bill also amends these sections to enable a magistrate to make a temporary declaration that premises are a prohibited brothel to ensure that illegal brothels do not operate out of premises in the period between the application for a declaration being made and the hearing of the application. The act currently prohibits applicants with a previous conviction for running a

brothel from obtaining a brothel licence or a manager's certificate. This provision has meant many applicants with prior experience of running a brothel have been excluded from the regulated industry.

The bill proposes to address this issue by changing the mandatory prohibition on applicants with a conviction for running a brothel obtaining a brothel licence or a manager's certificate to a matter that the Prostitution Licensing Authority must consider when assessing the suitability of applicants. This amendment will in no way reduce the stringent character and background checks that are made on potential brothel operators prior to a licence being granted.

The government remains vigilant against corruption and organised crime. The act still requires the Commissioner of Police to make any inquiries considered appropriate into the applicant. And the Prostitution Licensing Authority must still take into account all aspects of the applicant's criminal history, character and associates when determining whether an applicant is a suitable person to hold a licence.

Consistent with this, the government is increasing the list of offences that disqualify applicants from being eligible to operate a brothel to include all persons who have attempted to commit any of the listed offences and also any person who has conspired, counselled or procured the listed offences to be committed. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on the motion of Mr Seeney, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Leader of the House) (6.58 p.m.): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Retractable Needles

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.58 p.m.): I have spoken previously about the need to introduce retractable syringes into high-risk areas, starting with the syringes supplied to drug-dependent people. I still abide by that. Previously, I have tabled syringes that are to all intents and purposes retractable. They have not been registered in Australia as retractable syringes simply because we do not have a standard, but they are sound, reliable and very difficult to destroy to the point where the syringe becomes exposed and innocent people could suffer needle-stick injuries.

I wish to address another sector who use needles, that is those who are required to inject prescribed medications. I present to the House another alternative retractable needle that is available to Queensland Health and health professionals in this state that allows people such as diabetics—and I am thinking particularly of young diabetics who are still at school—to be able to administer their medication in a private manner and still be able to dispose of their syringes responsibly.

Without intending to endorse any one company, I have an example here of a syringe kit that has been put out by a group called Harm Reduction Services. They forwarded these kits to Cindy Bush, who is the chair of the Needlestick Action Group, and she lives in my electorate. These are very tidy kits. These two that I have are unopened and, therefore, contain syringes. These other two have been opened and they are quite harmless. This syringe kit is very tidy. It would not be any good for illicit drug users, because it requires some degree of responsible handling. The disposal equipment comes with a saline solution and swabs. Once the syringe has been used—and, as I said, I have two that have been used—the syringe and the needle are placed inside that container. That can be disposed of in any receptacle—whether it is a garbage can or an actual needle receptacle. If anyone tries to retract the syringe, the needle has been destroyed, because of a mechanism in the point. The only thing that they can get out is the plunger. I suppose they can poke someone's eye in with that, but that is about all.

I would like to table that unopened syringe kit. I do not want to worry the table staff by tabling one that has the syringe exposed. Currently, these kits are available in New South Wales and Victoria. If they are purchased in bulk, they cost about 40c a unit, that is, 40c for the case that contains the needle.

I think that members would agree that, for young people particularly who have to inject in a school toilet facility or wherever they go for privacy, that is a very neat package for them to carry around. I seek leave to table that and also the information from Harm Reduction Services.

Leave granted.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: Much has been said about the availability of retractable syringes.

Time expired.

Douglas Arterial Bridge

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (7.01 p.m.): While I will talk about blatant last minute electioneering in the seat of Herbert, let me first congratulate Townsville on the great news that both parties will fulfil their obligations to fund the Douglas Arterial Bridge. It is shameful that Peter Lindsay has waited until his own election campaign to make the announcement that the federal government would be funding the \$33 million to complete the bridge and the national highway. This decision should have been made two years ago when Mr Lindsay's *Plan to win Herbert* document was released. The statements in that document included confirmation of the proposed cross-river bridge to link Condon to the university. Indeed, Minister Steve Bredhauer even tabled the document in parliament last year to highlight the blatant hypocrisy of Mr Lindsay, who continued to confuse and misguide the people of Townsville. He always knew it was a federal project, but expected the Queensland taxpayers to foot the bill. Shame on the member for Herbert! He has held up Commonwealth government funding for this vital project so that he could confirm it last week during his election campaign.

Last year I spoke in this House about Mr Lindsay's continued untruths and misinformation. The state Minister for Transport, Steve Bredhauer, was always open and transparent in his discussions with the community and the media. He committed to a payback arrangement to allow a start on the hospital access, obviously beginning the much-awaited Douglas Arterial Bridge, and we committed \$7.3 million to begin that project.

While this government was open, while this government was accountable and transparent in its dealings and negotiations to secure funding for this much-needed project, correspondence to the Deputy Prime Minister found a big zero. There were no replies. How ignorant! And now we know that the member for Herbert held the state government and the people of the electorate to ransom until his election promise time. He is a desperate man who continually fooled his constituency by blaming the state government with his frantic passing of the buck. Marginal seats like this one can have this effect on the desperate, but it is no excuse.

Townsville residents should not forget either that Peter Lindsay and Les Tyrell shamelessly used the bridge to attack a Labor state government during its election campaign by demanding that the state fund a federal project. Next they will want us to fund the Army.

Thank goodness Peter Beattie, Steve Bredhauer and the local ALP members of Townsville showed the courage to stick to our position that federal money should be spent on federal projects. This decision, which was electorally unpopular at the time, saved Queenslanders \$33 million. Oh well, all is well that ends well. We have a federal bridge being funded by federal money because of a federal election.

Mount Isa Hospital

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.04 p.m.): I rise to speak on the crisis in staffing at Mount Isa Hospital. Recently when I raised this issue publicly, the government's response was to say, 'It's hysteria, it's nonsense, it's all made up.' Yet the facts had actually come from the staff at Mount Isa Hospital. The staff have gone public; the staff have said that there is a crisis with the resources that they have to work with and the number of people that are employed to do the job at that hospital.

While we know that at Mount Isa Hospital there have been ongoing problems with staffing issues, it was the staff who said that it had reached a crisis point. Only a matter of weeks ago the hospital was not doing elective surgery because of a lack of surgical nurses. The staff have come out and said that it is not safe to have doctors working in excess of 100 hours a week. Staff will not remain at the hospital if they do not get the backup, support and resources that they need.

I reiterate the staff's call for an independent review of the staffing situation at the Mount Isa Hospital. To date the government has done nothing. It has said that this is all under control, that it is looking after it thank you very much, and that there is no crisis. However, the staff have clearly said that there is a problem that needs an independent review. Clearly, they are not satisfied that the actions that to date Queensland Health and the minister have claimed they have taken are, in fact, satisfactory or are going to meet the needs of that hospital or the needs of the region. Once one gets below a critical mass of staff, obviously it gets harder to retain those who are already there because of the hours that they have to work. We have seen that happen. People who have given terrific service are unable to remain given the hours that they are expected to work.

There must be an independent review. This does not have to be an expensive or lengthy process, but it is not satisfactory for Queensland Health to say that it is dealing with the issue when one sees the level of concern being expressed and the poor staff morale at this hospital.

I challenge the minister to tell how she is measuring staff morale in Queensland Health facilities. When talking to staff at a number of facilities, one hears that they really do not want to work for the public system any more because they have not had their concerns addressed. To date, I do not see any independent indicator of responses from staff about staff morale unless they start resigning. There are a lot of other issues in addition to resources that the government should be addressing with regard to staff.

I reiterate the call of the Mount Isa Hospital staff who have said that they must have an independent review. They have called for a review of circumstances as well as resources in order to fix the problems that are occurring at this hospital. Their call for that review has come particularly in the last few weeks as they feel that issues have not been addressed. I reiterate that there must be a review in order to deal with the public health needs in this area.

Time expired.

Work'n'Place Project

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.07 p.m.): On 30 August I had the honour of launching a very important jobs project, the Work'n'Place project currently operating within Brisbane. Over 20 weeks this project will give 15 long-term unemployed people paid work and on-the-job experience. The Work'n'Place project is just one of hundreds that the Beattie government has created to help break the cycle of unemployment, but this project stands out because the participants face not only unemployment but also the challenge of a disability.

The Work'n'Place project is being coordinated by the Mental Health Association and the long-term unemployed people who are participating in it have a psychological disability. Mental illness is not often understood by the community in general. That means that something like a one-off and relatively short period of depression, for example, has the potential to turn into weeks, months or even years of unemployment. The erosion of hope and confidence that occurs can help to create an ongoing cycle of unemployment.

Participants in this project include people with many and varied talents and until now common prejudices about mental health have denied them the opportunity to participate in the open employment market. This project is as much about addressing the barriers faced by competent people with mental illness as it is about improving the skills of the participants. The Work'n'Place project is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness in the wider community of the valuable contribution that people with mental illness can make to our society.

I congratulate the Mental Health Association on initiating this project, which the state government has been pleased to support with a grant of \$164,900. The Work'n'Place project will give the 15 participants skills in office administration, including database entry, telephone reception and filing. They will develop these skills working for a number of organisations, including palliative care, Relationships Australia, the Brisbane City Council, the Pine Rivers Shire Council, the Sandgate and Bracken Ridge Action Group, or SandBAG, the Queensland Council of Social Services, Brisbane Youth Services and the Stroke Association of Queensland.

Two of the participants have already worked for the Mental Health Association in helping to organise Mental Health Week, which was held last October, and have developed desktop publishing skills in working on the association's newsletter and magazine. The Work'n'Place project is a wonderful example of the success of the Beattie government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative.

Piggery Effluent

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—Ind) (7.10 p.m.): Tonight I would like to bring to the attention of the House the matter of piggery effluent. I believe that under our laws, when a new piggery is built, it now has to include massive effluent ponds. This requirement has also been imposed on existing piggeries, which have a small pond that gets pumped out occasionally.

I understand where the DPI is coming from. However, there are some serious repercussions involved in this. I will explain this to the House. A few years ago, a friend of mine who lives in the Bell district set up a business which involved the purchase of a tractor and a spreader for effluent. His name is Gerry Klerks and, I might add, he is a fine human being. The business has grown extensively. He goes on to a farm, puts in his pump, stirs up the effluent, sucks it out into a tank and then spreads it onto the farmer's cultivation. The results from this are simply astounding. The crops that have been grown are unbelievable and there are even some farmers who do not own a piggery who are buying effluent from their neighbouring farmers. They sign up and buy the effluent that that farmer has not used simply because it is such a good item to put onto their crops. What a fantastic way of getting rid of this effluent.

With respect to big tanks, there is simply no way that operators such as Gerry can continue this good environmentally friendly way of distributing the effluent. When Gerry goes onto a farm, he stirs the effluent up out of the small ponds and distributes it. With respect to the big tanks, he cannot get in with the truck and it becomes toxic waste. In about 10 years time it will be a toxic waste dump. It will build up over the years and what will we do with it then? Will we build another pond? What will happen? This is a very serious problem that needs to be addressed and it is one that I bring to the attention of the House tonight.

Aged Care

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): For many residents in Toowoomba there is alarming concern over the state of the aged care system in Toowoomba. Mr Howard and the federal government define Toowoomba as overcatered for in aged care facilities. It is the reason that applications for more nursing homes, hostels and high-dependency care units have been refused. The irony is that almost every nursing home has a long waiting list. There is an alarming staff shortage and a desperate need for immediate high-dependency care in the area.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that there are 23,800 Darling Downs residents over 70, with almost half of them being Toowoomba residents. With such a large percentage of the Toowoomba population being in this age bracket, surely the federal government should realise that the aged care needs of this region cannot be dismissed.

One of the retirement villages I have been working with closely in my electorate is the Brownsholme retirement village in Highfields, just on the outskirts of Toowoomba. Just last week I invited Senator Joe Ludwig and Labor candidate for Groom Leann King out to Brownsholme to see the facilities and to listen to the residents' concerns relating to aged care.

One of the plans for the village was to establish a hostel and a nursing home that would provide high-dependency care for those residents who might require it in the long term. Their request is definitely justifiable. However, it has been denied. Because of this, they tell me that they feel like second-class citizens. The irony is that these people are first-class citizens of our state. They have paid their taxes, they have worked hard all their lives to provide a good life for their children, and they deserve respect from the federal government.

John Howard's representatives should do their jobs properly and get out into the community. They should see the extreme pressure that is being put on nurses because of the drastic staff shortages. They should talk to the people who are on waiting lists desperately needing high-dependency care. They should hear how these people feel like second-class citizens because their needs are being dismissed by the federal government. As their state elected representative, it breaks my heart to hear their demands and know there is a limit to what I can do. Aged care falls under federal government responsibilities, and what the federal government is doing in Toowoomba is not good enough. We need more beds, more staff and more high-dependency care units.

The federal government should not be complacent and rely on statistics to tell it whether Toowoomba is well catered for in aged care facilities. Maybe then it would understand that Toowoomba is far from overcatered for when it comes to aged care and that something desperately needs to be done.

Time expired.

Queensland Ambulance Service

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (7.15 p.m.): Tonight I wish to draw the attention of the House to a situation in Mackay and surrounding areas in terms of QAS response times. One would have to understand that the prime responder for QAS in Mackay is in south Mackay. For that ambulance to respond to an area that would be just outside of Mackay could easily take 8 or 10 minutes depending on the amount of traffic on the road leading to what we call the city gates.

The responding ambulances to an accident, in terms of a call anywhere between Eungella, which is 70 kilometres to the west of Mackay in the Pioneer Valley, or up along the Peak Downs highway to the south-west to the coalmines, are at Nebo, which is about 110 kilometres away. I am getting a number of calls in respect of late service times in terms of delivery of ambulance services in all of that area.

One of the big concerns is the township of Walkerston, which is only about eight kilometres out of the city gates of Mackay. I have had numerous calls about time delays of up to 50 minutes for an ambulance to make the distance out to Walkerston. One would have to understand that anything west or to the south-west would be considerably longer. It is generating quite a deal of concern amongst residents, and there are quite a number of residents in that area.

It was an issue highlighted during the last election. I am disappointed to see that a review of the response times in that area was promised. I have not actually heard anything in respect of that matter. It continues to be of great concern to me. I will quote from one of the numerous letters I have received. A person by the name of Ian Hoffmann writes—

I reside at Ritchies Road, Pleystowe, which is 15 minutes from the Mackay City Gates.

On Tuesday the 4th of September at approximately 8.30 p.m. my wife was suffering severe chest pains in the heart region as well as pain down her left arm. She then went into an unconscious state.

I asked my 19-year-old son to phone an ambulance via 000.

He was put through to the ambulance, which rang out three times before eventually making contact. I could not wait any longer so I instructed my son to inform them that I would meet them along the road.

I never met up with the ambulance.

I checked my wife in at the hospital and then phoned my son to cancel the ambulance.

I have since found out that there was no ambulance available from South Mackay and I had to be dispatched an ambulance from North Mackay. This would have added another 10 minutes to the trip.

This is typical of a number of letters I am receiving from that area. It really is of great concern to me. I support the residents of the Walkerston, Mirani, Marion and Eaton areas in their endeavours to acquire an ambulance centre. They need a faster response.

Time expired.

Horizon Foundation Inc.

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (7.18 p.m.): I rise to inform the House about an organisation providing support and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. I am speaking of the Horizon Foundation Inc. The Horizon Foundation carries out its activities through the Redlands, Logan and Gold Coast areas. The Executive Director, Mr Joe Gamblin, runs an extensive network of programs to support people with a disability.

The diverse range of services is evidenced by services such as Dial a Mower, which provides a ground maintenance team specialising in such services as lawn mowing, rubbish removal or landscape design for either industrial or commercial jobs; and Marketforce, which provides a wide range of personalised services including bulk mailing, packaging, collating, laminating, heat sealing and comb binding, which I intend using for some distributions in my own electorate. There is also a business called Wire and Wood Products, which manufactures quality wood products in popular hardware, pet and nursery lines. Most of the wooden saw horses that are sold in south-east Queensland would be built in Horizons' Wire and Wood Products workshop.

Through the support offered by programs such as ICAN, AXIOM and COAST, many post-school young people with disabilities are supported to maximise the level of community independence that can be enjoyed by young adults with a disability. Horizon Foundation also runs an employment service, assisting people with a disability or an injury to gain and maintain employment. I would like to highlight a local success story of Link Personnel.

A lady by the name of Angela Robinson suffers from minor cerebral palsy. She was employed by the Franklins supermarket in my local area. After the subsequent redevelopment

and the problems that Franklins ran into, Woolworths bought the rights to the local Franklins store. Angela was lucky enough to be employed by Woolworths in the new Victoria Point Shopping Centre. Despite Angela's minor cerebral palsy, she has shown herself to be a highly dedicated and effective worker with Woolworths.

I have spoken to Angela and I have also spoken to the store manager there, Mark Mead, and discussed Angela's position. All the staff are extremely happy with her performance. I am sure that with the support of the store manager, Mark Mead, and the customer service manager, Selina Hovey, Angela will prove to be a very valuable employee of Woolworths. I have to compliment Woolworths and Horizon for allowing the process through which Angela Robinson can contribute to society, as do many of the other workers who are employed by the businesses run by the Horizon Foundation.

Domestic Violence

Mr FLYNN (Lockyer—ONP) (7.21 p.m.): I was recently invited to attend the annual general meeting of the Domestic Violence Resource Centre in Brisbane. I had previously been in contact with this worthy group in my police role as a domestic violence liaison officer. But until this meeting I had not had the opportunity to put faces to names nor met the stalwarts manning ramparts against violence in the home. This morning I took the liberty of distributing to each member a profile of that centre, which I do hope will be of interest to all MPs.

Many people prefer to ignore domestic violence because it is too big a problem or, indeed, there are some short-sighted people who fail deliberately or otherwise to admit the problem exists at all. Whilst the centre does all it can with what it has, it is not enough. I have to say that this is partially due to insufficient funding. I am aware of this government's push to deal with the problem, but in all seriousness we need to spend less on some frivolities than we do on addressing an issue in our state which is responsible for more social problems and crimes than any other, with the exception perhaps of drugs.

In 24 years of police service we went from having our hands totally tied behind our backs to being released with support. But that support could somewhat turn out to be an illusion with police, particularly in country areas, and specific aid groups such as the Domestic Violence Resource Centre having, along with the best of intentions and well-researched action plans, little in the way of hard cash to implement these strategies. I have been to literally hundreds of domestics where the emotional traumas involved were so great that even hard-nosed police veterans did not remain untouched.

It is easy for some to say that the warriors in the front line against domestic violence should do this and that and they should follow each case closely and through to the end. All they can realistically do is pick up the very worst cases, do some first aid work and refer on. This situation creates instability and allows many important cases to slip through the net. As we all know, Magistrate Pat O'Shane was recently soundly criticised for suggesting that in some cases of violence women do not tell the truth. The sad story is that we must recognise the reality of the statement in some cases.

The essential difference between the police approach and that of others is that police are in the business of investigation, and in the very process of that investigation it is clear to all involved that they cannot be biased and make a statement of belief in the story of the aggrieved person. All police can do is be sensitive to the trauma of the parties involved and reveal to participants that both will be heard and a best case determination arrived at given the evidence available. What seems to be missed is the education of the male of the species, who are driven into damage control mode by the growing belief that men are solely responsible for the ills of the world. If we are serious about combating this issue, we must actively involve men in the collaborative approach, dealing not only with incidents but also with the development of strategies.

Time expired.

Mr FLYNN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I realise my time has expired, but I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech on a bipartisan basis.

Leave granted.

I mentioned this specifically, as at the AGM of the centre, I was one of two men present, the other being the centre's treasurer. You cannot address domestic violence without affirmative action involving both genders.

I close in encouraging all MPs, particularly those with domestic violence groups and magistrates courts in their electorates, to actively facilitate in assisting those involved in the ongoing battle against violence in the home.

I commend the centre's workers and their task to this House.

Burrowes Primary School

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (7.25 p.m.): There are times when a group of people do extraordinary things and deserve a great deal of recognition. Such is the case at Burrowes Primary School in Marsden where I was recently privileged to represent the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, at the official opening of their Burrowes Federation Hall. Four years ago this hall was but a dream, but the partnership of many dedicated members of the school community, including then principal, Mike Ennis; his deputy and now acting principal, Anne Nasca; teachers and staff; the then P&C chairman and project manager, Ross Toshach, and his team of hardworking parents; present P&C chairman, Norman Gill; district director of education, Ron Daniel; Deputy Mayor of Logan City Council, Graham Able; and many other members of the community have seen this project through to fruition in an amazingly short time.

To this core of enthusiastic people came a newly elected state member, John Mickel, enthusiastic and keen to advance the project. John had an uncanny way of sniffing out the various buckets of funding as well as being an expert at fundraising barbecues. Thus the partnerships were formed and serious planning began. All three levels of government contributed through various grants and they received a great deal of assistance from Mr Greg Cahill of the Department of Sport and Recreation. Special mention should also be made of the then Education Minister, Dean Wells.

Our state government is proud to have contributed \$220,000 and believes that this funding will have wide benefits not only to the school but also to the wider community. However, the greatest accolade must go to the P&C committee, which raised an incredible \$125,000. This is not a wealthy community. The needs in the area are great, but to see a school community get behind a project of this magnitude and sustain their fundraising effort to be able to have the hall completed and officially opened in September 2001 is, indeed, worthy of our highest praise.

I convey my congratulations and, I believe, those of my colleagues to all who made this project possible and put in so much effort. I do wish to highlight the tremendous contribution of Mr Ross Toshach, the P&C chairman. Ross is a builder, so he was able to guide the project through to completion and contribute much of his professional expertise so that there was a considerable cost saving with in-kind labour. The hall comprises an auditorium which will cater for both skilled performances and community programs, allow many indoor—

Time expired.

Queensland Festival of the Horse

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (7.28 p.m.): This past weekend the Queensland Festival of the Horse concluded in Toowoomba and the Darling Downs. It is the third year of the Queensland Festival of the Horse and joins the very busy calendar of events and festivals that occur in Toowoomba. I was proud to be on the first board and the organising committee of the festival three years ago. During the elapsed time I have seen it grow into a much bigger and much more successful event. It has a very positive future and I am sure it will be a very important part of the Queensland horse industry right around the state.

The horse industry is a huge industry for Queensland but, more importantly, it is a huge industry for Toowoomba and the downs. It comprises not only the racing industry, which is well known to all of us, but also the recreational industry, the harness racing industry and the associated services that go along with them: the veterinary services, the farriers, the educational facilities that are at Gatton campus—a whole range of things is associated with the horse industry. It is something that we should nurture and continue to grow.

A range of events is held over the 10-day period. One of the major events this year was the Centenary of Federation Equine Parade, which went from the Toowoomba Turf Club to the Toowoomba Royal Showgrounds. It also included a re-enactment of the riders of the Light Horse Brigade. Lieutenant General Peter Cosgrove was in attendance to take the march past. It was a very successful event with all sorts of people participating from recreational riders, sporting groups, breed groups, carriages, horse drawn vehicles and, of course, the Light Horse Brigade.

A number of race meetings were held and not only in Toowoomba. There were also picnic races, which were held at Dalby. There was a very successful trail ride. That event started out three years ago and was organised by my Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Toowoomba, which has grown into a trail ride that includes over 200 riders. It had a hugely successful country music concert at night.

The Equine Hall of Fame has been established, and Gunsynd was one of the five inductees this year. The Energex \$6,000 Equine Art Competition is one of the pre-eminent art competitions in Australia at this stage. There were two stud tours, including famous names like Wattle Brae and Eureka studs and new studs like Highgrove, and many other studs were obviously included in those tours. There were polo and polocrosse demonstrations, and the Barastoc Horse of the Year competition was held at the Toowoomba Showgrounds and run by the EFAQ, the Equine Federation of Australia (Queensland). This year the competition had over 1,700 entries. That is a huge competition by anyone's standards in terms of horse competitions. A charity ball was held at the start of the event at the historic Gabbinbar Homestead where, as has become custom now, the painting by Brian Malt—

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.31 p.m.